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HERMANN AGHA

AN EASTERN NARRATIVE

W. GIFFORD PALGRAVE.



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"I HEARD A SOUND OF VOICES IN THE GARDEN."

THE
AUTHOR
OF THE
OF THE
OF THE
And sold by the
And printed by

THIRD EDITION

LONDON.

J. KEGAN PAUL & Co., 1, PATERNOSTER SQUARE.

1878.

251. e. 576.



HERMANN AGHA:

AN EASTERN NARRATIVE.

BY

W. GIFFORD PALGRAVE,

AUTHOR OF "TRAVELS IN CENTRAL ARABIA,"

ETC.

"I ran it through, even from my boyish days,
To the very moment that he bade me tell it;
Wherein I spoke of most disastrous chances,
Of moving accidents by flood and field,
Of hair-breadth 'scapes,
Of being taken by the insolent foe
And sold to slavery; of my redemption thence,
And portance in my travels' history."

—Shakespeare.

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PREFACE.

TALES called "Eastern," are very generally characterised by an extravagance in plot and in detail, an exaggeration in sentiment and in expression, which bear a hardly nearer resemblance to the realities of Eastern life, than the "Cato" of Addison or the "Count Robert" of Scott do to the times and persons they profess to represent. Even the current versions—not Lane's—or rather paraphrases, of the "Arabian Nights," belong in great measure to this class; while Hope's inimitable "Anastasius," so perfect in its Levantine delineations, becomes unreal when venturing into the regions of unalloyed Oriental existence.

This is a thing to be regretted; for false notions, though on subjects of comparatively

remote interest, never fail to be ultimately, in some way or other, injurious; and whatever is worth knowing at all, is worth knowing rightly.

In the following narrative, I have accordingly endeavoured to lay open before Western eyes a page, one page only, from the great volume of Eastern life. Its characters are all the better legible through the light thrown by the reflex or subjective European intellect on the more spontaneous and objective ways and habits of Asia, especially when the two natures are brought, as they are in this narrative, into intimate contact. The result of such contact is often a strange one; it was so in the present instance; so strange, indeed, that some apology might seem requisite for its publication.

Be its apology then, that it is not fiction, but reality; not invention, but narration. Hence also, like whatever is true, it has its moral, or indeed its many morals; they may be found by those who seek them, in the incidents them-

selves, of the manifold loom of life that weaves the chequer-work of colour and race in the lands where, as some think, all races and all colours had origin.

The narrator, and at the same time the principal character, of this story is Hermann Wolff, a Saxon, native of the village of Rosenau, near Törzberg, on the south-eastern frontier of Transylvania. Hermann had, while yet a boy, in the year 1762, been carried off into slavery by a band of Turkish marauders. But at the time here chronicled, that is, in the month of June nine years later, he was already an officer of high trust in the service of the famous 'Alee Beg Baloot-Kapan, the Georgian, then for a short space independent ruler of Egypt; and as such, he held rank in the conquering fleet that sailed from Egypt to Syria in 1771. It is well known how 'Alee Beg threw off, in 1768, the allegiance of the Porte; and, in the fourth year of his rebellion, commissioned his lieutenant

Mohammed-Beg Abou-Dahab to invade and subdue Syria with an army that anticipated the exploits of Ibraheem Pasha and his soldiers in the nineteenth century; meeting with like success at first, followed by similar but even more crushing ruin, both to the troops and to him who sent them, at the close. However, in 1771, 'Alee Beg was at the height of his good-fortune; and his young favourite and brother-in-law Hermann, then known as Ahmed Beg en-Nimsawee, or the German, might well be proud of the flag under which he sailed. And then it was, on board of an Egyptian vessel, that he related what follows to his intimate friend and associate, the Arab Tantawee Beg, so called after his native village of Tintah, in Lower Egypt, one of the chief leaders in the Syrian expedition, the right arm of 'Alee Beg in life, and the faithful companion of his downfall and death, in 1773, in the forty-fifth year of his age. I should here add, that Hermann's younger sister Mary, entitled by Egyptian chroniclers "the beautiful,"

had been, like her brother, kidnapped from Rosenau while yet a child; and, after many vicissitudes, was at this epoch the favourite wife of 'Alee Beg himself, and mother of his only daughter, the dearly beloved Khadeejah.

It was in the Mosque called after Mohammed Aboo-Dahab, the lieutenant, murderer, and successor of 'Alee Beg, in the north-east quarter of Cairo, that, under the guidance of a learned Sheykh of the town, I found and studied the manuscript records of the great Egyptian revolt, and of those concerned in it. And thence I extracted the main facts, among which the present tale forms an episode. The rest was drawn by me from other sources, for the authenticity of which I can vouch, but need not here specify more particularly.

The attempt to transfer an Eastern picture to a Western canvas, has necessitated the adoption of a certain liberty of phrase and expression, unusual perhaps among Orientalists; but due to the impossibility of giving to a literal trans-

lation of Arab word and thought, the vividness required for the reproduction of the imaged sense in European minds. By so doing, I have in a measure sacrificed philology to truth; perhaps, an advantageous sacrifice. Nor does this in reality detract from the exactness of the rendering. Youth, energy, and love, have a language of their own more ancient than Babel; a tongue still common and unconfused by tribe or clime.

HERMANN AGHA.



PART I.

50 Late or early, dusk or clear,
Spring-tide comes but once a year;
Joy or sorrow, lost or won,
Heart's first love is once alone.

Summer seasons may be fair,
But sweet spring-tide is not there.
Later loves right dear may prove,
Yet they liken not first love.

“AND now,” said Tanṭawee Beg to his friend, as they sat together near the stern bulwarks of the ship, somewhat apart from the others on board, “let me hear what next happened to you after your capture.”

Hermann complied, and thus continued his story,—

“After about a fortnight of stupefaction, rather than of positive suffering, passed in the village—I forget its name—where the marauders stopped to take stock of, and to portion out their booty, my wounds, which were not dangerous, had healed sufficiently to permit of my

accompanying my captors on their seemingly interminable round of march and halt, across what I afterwards learned to be the province of Roumelia. Afterwards, I say ; for at the time itself I paid little attention either to the country we traversed, or to any other circumstance of the journey, except my own miserable condition, my ruined past, my unhappy present, and my worse than uncertain future. At last, when God willed, we reached Constantinople.

“ As we approached it, the actual view of that vast capital, known to me in my native town only by vague and fabulous description, its far-reaching crown of walls and towers, its domes and minarets, its cypress groves and gilded pinnacles, aroused me for the first time from the half-lethargy in which I was plunged. I gazed with a sense of admiration and curiosity, not unmixed even then with a sort of boyish eagerness to be there, and to take my part in that unknown world ; till I felt almost a desire to begin my new life, whatever that might be, in good earnest, though I could not so soon forget all that I had left behind me in the old.

“ But my spirits sank again when once within the town, where I could then see absolutely nothing beyond the narrow and uneven streets which we slowly threaded, till, after many windings and turnings, we stopped before a low stone portal, crossed by an iron chain.

Here our band alighted; and I soon found myself within, lodged, or, to use a more fitting term, stabled, in company with a score of fellow-captives, mostly Georgians and Circassians, in the vault of a large and gloomy khan,¹ situated, as I subsequently discovered, in the very heart of the city. Three days after, days of discomfort and degradation that I gladly pass over in memory as in recital, I was a purchased slave.

“The master whom my fate assigned me was a wealthy Beg, of an old Koordish family, resident for some generations past in the city of Bagdad. There he had been born and brought up; and now, after a long course of intriguing to be appointed Pasha over his natal town and district, had at length attained the scope of his persevering ambition. This he had effected by presenting himself in person at Constantinople, along with such good store of costly shawls and carpets, of coin and jewellery, of Persian tumbakee,² and Khorassan sabres, that he had effectually convinced all the Stamboul officials who were anyway, directly or indirectly, concerned in the nomination to that important post, from the Sadr-ul-'Aazem, or

¹ A large, unfurnished building, generally quadrangular in form, and containing vaults and rooms for the accommodation of goods or travellers.

² A kind of tobacco, used for the water-pipe, or hooka; the best is grown at Shiraz.

Grand Vizier, downwards, that he, Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo Beg,¹ was, alone of all candidates present or possible, rightly qualified to fill it.

“Business, however, even when conducted by those best of agents, gifts, is slow work at Constantinople ; and Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo had already, I was told, passed six entire months of attendance and present-making at the capital ; and he was now, not unnaturally, anxious to bring so expensive a stay to an end. However, before quitting the scene of his hard-earned diplomatic, or rather financial triumph, the new-made Pasha had prudently determined to surround his person with a select number of attendants, strangers to the jealousies and plots of ‘Irak²’ and Bagdad. But at the same time, and for analogous reasons, he was unwilling to take with him, as the future inmates of his palace, any who had been themselves long enough at Constantinople to form over close and, possibly, dangerous connections there ; lest by so doing he should, instead of a body-servant, get hold of a spy, perhaps an assassin. Hence his

¹ The son of black Mustapha.

² “ ‘Irak ” is the extreme south-east province of the Turkish Empire, comprising the lower course of the Tigris and Euphrates down to the Persian Gulf ; its inhabitants have been at all times ill-famed for fickleness and treachery.

choice fell by preference on new arrivals from distant lands, such as myself.

“Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo, when I was first brought before him, was sitting in an apartment of the Yenee-Khan,¹ near the mosque called that of Bayazeed, after its founder, the sultan second of that name. My conductors had provided me for the occasion with decent though coarse clothing, of Turkish fashion, and had besides given me the benefit of a bath, which, while it improved my general appearance, refreshed and made me feel after a manner disposed to meet my new lot with equanimity, if not with cheerfulness.

“We entered. The Pasha was installed on a divan which his attendants had extemporized for him out of mattresses and carpets; some of these he had brought with him all the weary way from Bagdad, as might be reasonably conjectured from the travel-stains; others were fresh, and apparently of recent purchase. All around in the large square room was a confusion of brass ewers and basins, of pipes and drinking cups, of coffee services and cooking utensils, of saddlery and saddle-bags, of arms various in size, form, and use; guns, swords, daggers, pistols, some brass, some iron or steel, some short, some long, plain and inlaid, old and

¹ “New Khan;” a portion of it still remains.

new. Bales of cloth were piled up in one corner ; saddlery, thickly studded, one set with brass, another with silver ; housings of rich but faded velvets, red and blue, broadly worked with tarnished gold ; and horse-cloths of which the colour and material were scarcely distinguishable, through the wear and tear of road and weather, lay chaotically heaped together in another ; while half a dozen lances, four tufted and two tasselled, stood propped up in a third ; all bespoke journey done and yet to do.

“ As disordered a medley were the persons to whom these articles belonged. A dozen of the Pasha’s retinue, wild, olive-complexioned fellows in long Arab dresses, where all the colours of the rainbow were dashed with all the colours of the soil, sat or lounged in the courtyard below ; while on the landing-place at the head of the stairs several better-class attendants, attired in the clothes of rough silk proper to the towsmen of the South, and seemingly from Bagdad itself or its immediate neighbourhood, stood chatting together in groups ; their fair complexions contrasting strongly with the brown or black of about an equal number of Abyssinians and negroes ; one of these last, a stout African fully armed, guarded the chamber door. As for the newly made Pasha himself, a handsome black-eyed, black-browed, hook-nosed man, every inch a Koorde, with a

thick black beard slightly sprinkled with grey, but no other mark of advancing age on his dusky face, he was diligently smoking a nargheelah,¹ a very grand one, fantastically enamelled about its silver stem, and shaped into a lily-flower, also of silver; while at the same time he was attentively looking over scraps and jottings of accounts with his *kaḥiya*.² This latter was a Christian native of a hamlet near Bagdad, plainly dressed in dark colours.

“When I had been introduced into the room, the Pasha, raising his head, reconnoitred me from top to toe, and in every possible light and angle. When however my conductors proposed, by way of a certificate, some still closer and minuter inspections—so at least I conjectured from their manner, but as the conversation was held mostly in Arabic, a language with which I was yet unacquainted, I could only guess—the Pasha, much to my satisfaction, checked them; having already, as it appeared, sufficiently made up his mind.

“After some remarks addressed, but still in Arabic, to his Bagdadee followers, whose curiosity had led them, unbidden into the apartment,—an intrusion which, how-

¹ A water-pipe, of metal or glass; the smoke is inhaled through a long flexible tube.

² Head-writer. or clerk.

ever, their master did not in the least appear to resent,—he put to me a few questions in Turkish, with the colloquial forms of which I was—thanks to previous intercourse with the peasants from the other side of our own frontier, and the not unfrequent arrivals of muleteers and salesmen through the pass of Törzberg, and in the village of Rosenau itself—already fairly well acquainted. How old was I? Of what nationality? How had I been made a prisoner? Was I a good rider? A practised shot? and the like. My answers must, on the whole, have been satisfactory; for, after some chaffering, chiefly conducted by the *kaḥiya*, who no doubt secured for himself a very respectable profit on the bargain, five full purses¹ of silver, a considerable sum, were paid for me that very day; and I was enrolled among the slaves in the Pasha's suite.

The household was a transitionary one, and no very special duty in it was at first assigned me; occasionally I filled and presented a pipe, or served guests with lemonade and coffee, or scoured arms and harness. This done, I was free to lounge away three-fourths of my time in a fine suit of clothes, with which I was from

¹ A "purse" is five hundred piastres, the piastre was equivalent to about eighteen-pence, English; it has now sunk to two-pence; the sum here indicated must have been about £186.

the first becomingly rigged-out by my master's liberality. And really I felt almost, not to say quite, vain of the unlimited silk sash, the silver-embroidered selahlik,¹ the long blue silk tassel to my cap, and the shiny red boots, but these last I always took off when I came into the Pasha's presence; not to mention the loose trousers and open jacket of stout dark-green cloth, the wearing of which first taught me by experience how much more comfortable and serviceable Asiatic garments are, in most respects, than European.

"About this same time Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo made some further purchases of live and intelligent stock, in addition to the dozen Circassians, Abyssinians, and negroes, with whom he had already provided himself while here. These new acquisitions were two Greek lads, natives of some island or other in the Archipelago, and a Croatian; the former sly supple fellows, up to any cleverness or villany; the latter a rough raw-boned creature, but true as steel, and good at all kinds of work.

"We remained yet a month longer at Constantinople, during a week of which I was laid up by the ceremonies, or rather the ceremony, for there is, you know, only one in fact, but it is a serious affair, performed to make

¹ Arms-belt.

me a chartered Mussulman. This inconvenience over, I enjoyed myself considerably; visiting, along with my fellows, the world then new to me, countless *kahwahs*,¹ baths, and other places of town-amusement, gazing round me in the solemn gloom of Agia Sophia,² or the dazzling splendour of the Soleymaneeyah,³ that unrivalled dome of brilliancy."

"I should like to see it, and hope to do so one day, uninvited," here interrupted Tanawee Beg; "though, from what I hear, Agia Sophia must bear a nearer resemblance to our own Egyptian style."

"Please God you shall, and I be with you," replied Hermann; then continued;—"sauntering amid the cypresses and sycamores of Eyoob,⁴ or threading in a caique—novel pleasure—the emerald windings of the Bosphorus; sometimes also riding, slowly and deferentially, with my master on his visits of ceremony or

¹ Places where coffee, and often strong drink is sold; they are the common resort of Eastern idleness and gossip, occasionally vice.

² Justinian's cathedral, now the mosque of that name.

³ The great mosque built by Soleyman the Magnificent, and the finest specimen of Turkish architecture in the world; it is also called "*Ḳubbett-en-Noor*," or the cupola of light."

⁴ A well-known mosque and cemetery of that name on the Golden Horn.

friendship, now within the limits of the city, now without.

“On one of these occasions, the Pasha happened to be accompanied by four attendants only, myself, two Bagdadees, and the negro whom I had seen acting as door-keeper on the day of my purchase—a good-natured thickset Darfooree,¹ Sa’eed by name; the place we were bound for was somewhat distant, and the ride long. While on the way, I observed a figure, a familiar one I thought, that slipped quietly, and, as it were, furtively, out of a small side-door in the wall of a large inclosure, where stood, half-visible through the foliage of the trees, now thinned by advancing autumn, a spacious and handsome house, adorned with quaint arabesques of many colours under its projecting eaves. Looking more attentively I recognized Yoosuf, one of our master’s lately adopted Greeks, and pointed him out to my companions. But while I was doing so, the sound either of our voices, or of the approaching tread of our horses, caught his ear; he looked up a moment, then turning sharp off took the direction of a side-alley that soon withdrew him from our sight.

¹ i.e. Native of Darfoor, a negro kingdom of Central Africa, not far from Kordofan; its inhabitants are distinguished for strength and courage.

“ ‘ What on earth can Yoosuf have to do all alone here in this part of the town ? ’ said one of the Bagdadees in our party.

“ ‘ Some intrigue or other rascality of his own, I suppose—no good, for certain ; what good did a Greek ever go after ? ’ answered the other, who was by no means in love with the new arrivals.

“ Almost instinctively I looked back towards the spot where I had seen him first emerge, and inquired to whom the garden and the house over the wall belonged. Sa’eed the negro looked also, and having recognised it, informed us that it was the house of one Eyas Beg, a wealthy member of the Defterdar¹ Government department ; the Beg was of Armenian origin, though now a professed Muslim. Meanwhile the Pasha, deep in his own thoughts, had ridden on ; and took, or seemed to take, no notice of the occurrence or of our talk ; nor could a mere attendant, like one of ourselves, have ventured unquestioned to broach to him this, or indeed any other subject. As for myself, I hardly gave it a second thought at the time ; but somehow the name of Eyas Beg stuck in my mind ; from its novelty perhaps.

“ Some days later it was my duty to form part of my

¹ The Financial.

master's suite, on a visit which he paid to the Nishanjee Pasha;¹ who, at the Sultan's behoof, had signed and sealed the freshly issued diploma of government for the province of Bagdad. This dignitary kept state in a handsome open kiosk on the sea-shore, near the harbour point, just beyond the outer wall of the great Serey'.²

"While at my ordinary post of waiting on occasions like these, by the open door of the kiosk, I could see, looking in, many persons of the highest rank and importance assembled there. Of their number was the quondam Armenian, Eyas Beg; he was pointed out to me by the negro Sa'eed, who happened to be at my side. The expression of the Beg's eye, a dull, heavy eye, when he turned it, as he often did, on our master, was remarkable and unpleasing; and he kept ever and anon whispering, between glances and winks, to his next-hand neighbour. This was a pale thin-faced man, evidently of southern and provincial origin, dressed in the simple white turban usually worn by those of the Molla³ class; his eye was, if possible, yet more sinister than

¹ An official of high and often misplaced trust, who used to affix the facsimile of the imperial signature to documents of importance. The post has since been abolished.

² Palace.

³ A legist; often, but erroneously, rendered, a priest.

that of Eyas Beg himself. This man had the eye of the serpent, the other that of the wolf. I asked Sa'eed what his name might be; he answered,—

“‘I do not know; but his face shows him to be from Bagdad, or thereabouts; it is an unlucky face; curse him.’”

“‘There is mischief at work somewhere,’ thought I; but neither my position nor other circumstances permitted my communicating my suspicions to anybody, leastways to our master.

“At last all formalities were completed; and about a week after our visit to the Nishanjee Pasha, we set out on our way for Bagdad. We crossed over to Scutari in boats; thence, passing through Ismid, Angora, Keer-Shahr, and many other towns, we pursued a long, and at times, a difficult route, till we reached Keysareeyah.¹ Winter had now fairly set in, and the highlands which we traversed were often covered with snow. Indeed at Keersareeyah itself we came to a dead halt; the mountains between that place and Kharpoot² being, so the country people said, almost impassable.

“In Keysareeyah, accordingly, we remained rather

¹ The Cæsarea of the Byzantine Empire; a central town in Asia Minor, and still of importance. The inhabitants have been at all times noted for turbulence and sedition.

² The next large town easterly, on the Bagdad road.

more than a month. We were lodged altogether in a huge, straggling house, belonging to one of the turbulent city-Aghas, close by the old castle, and had little to do but to warm our hands over pans of charcoal, wander listlessly and well muffled up through the covered labyrinth of the interminable market place, and wish for the return of milder weather.

“The cold tried us all much, though not equally; the Pasha, wrapped in double furs, scarcely stirred from the fireside; the Bagdadees, negroes, and their like, kept the doors closed, huddled together, and whined. One, indeed, of the Bagdadees fell ill and died. We buried him a bow-shot outside the town walls, in the old Turkoman cemetery, then deep in snow; I pitied him for having to lie in so cold a resting-place. The Dalmatian—Michael had been his original name, but this had subsequently been changed to Ghalib—and I felt the climate least of all; Istrian and Carpathian winters had seasoned our boyhood to that which seemed to most of our comrades an unbearable severity of temperature. This circumstance proved a lucky one for me; as it enabled me to secure to myself, for ever after, the devoted friendship of the negro Sa’eed, by means of an opportune present which I here made him, of my sheepskin overcoat. True, the Pasha had provided each of us with one for the road; but Sa’eed, with the innate recklessness of his

kind, had lost or sold—he said the former, but I believe it was the latter—that given to him before he was out of Constantinople; for me, I could make tolerable shift without one.

“So passed our time, dully enough on the whole, till February brought a somewhat milder air, and we resumed our journey. So far as the roads went, this second stage of our journey was, however, the roughest and the worst; the mountains were high, the paths desperate, and our beasts well-nigh worn out with work and scarcity of provender. March was far advanced before we reached Diar-Bekr,¹ its walls stood out particularly black against the mountains of Koordistan beyond, still streaked with snow.

“More than three months had now elapsed since we left Constantinople, six, since I had seen my last of Transylvania; and I had by this time really got to like my new life. Not that I had wholly lost the memory of my father and the rest of my family; on the contrary I often thought of them, and of my sister Mary in particular, with regret and anxiety. Still I was young; and all my homeward thoughts did

¹ Anciently Amida, a large and busy town on the right bank of the Tigris; the great valley leading down to the Persian Gulf commences here.

not hinder me from taking very hearty interest and pleasure in the countries we traversed; in the noble scenery, the wooded crags, the rushing torrents, the wide plains, the dense forests; in the quaint, quiet villages; the frequent ruins of unknown date; the vegetation and tillage—that is, such of it as was apparent even at this season of the year in sheltered spots—new to my eyes; also in the strange customs and unwonted manners of the men; occasionally too—but that was a rare good fortune—in the pretty faces of the peasant girls. Now and then also we got a chance shot at a hare, a woodcock, or the like; we quarrelled with some villagers, and were friendly with others. One day, the weather was fine, and the sky, in spite of the wintry season, quite startling to me in its clearness, the air pure and brisk; another day, heavy showers of rain and sleet, with driving wind and mist, would give us something of an adventure in hunting after a shelter; in a word, I enjoyed the journey much more than, not a half a year before, I could have thought possible for me.

“With most of my fellow-travellers, however, matters went otherwise. The Bagdadees, annoyed by the cold, and little used to roughing it, were frequently out of humour; the Circassians took occasion from every accident or inconvenience of the route to quarrel with all around them in general, and with each other in par-

ticular; while the two Greeks seemed to be always on the look out for something that they could not find.

“Not caring for squabbles and intrigues, I preferred associating with the better-humoured ones of our party; that is, with the semi-Koordish Arab horsemen—men accustomed to adventure and fatigue, wild daring fellows, whose courage seemed to rise with every hardship and difficulty. I derived much amusement, too, from our half-dozen blacks, who, when not in a state of violent but short-lived passion about some very inadequate cause, were normally in excellent spirits, and sociable enough. The Croatian, Ghalib, kept along with us, but was no talker; besides, he knew neither Turkish nor Arabic, and only a few words of German; of this last language he availed himself when hard pressed to communicate with me, and through me with the others. I was, on the contrary, quick at learning, and had, in addition to my Turkish, already picked up a fair amount of low Arabic, for which I was chiefly indebted to my African companions. With our master, the Pasha, we had little converse; he rode apart, none being habitually near him but his *kaḥiya*, and two other men of similar rank; one of these was a distant relation, and his private secretary.

“We remained twenty days at Diar-Bekr. All had

need of repose—Pasha and slaves, attendants and horses. The genial spring warmth, so different from the lifeless heat of autumn, invited us to rest and to repair our strength; and the town, unlike Keysareeyah, abounded in attractions for visitors of whatever sort, besides those more especially prepared for or reserved to ourselves. It was a pleasant time.

“During our stay here, I more than once helped to escort my master on his frequent visits to an intimate friend, one Rustoom Beg, a Koorde of old family, wealthy, and influential. The Beg’s house was agreeably situated among the gardens without the town walls, not far from the river; on every side of it rose a perfect forest of fruit-trees of every kind, now in the fullest of their blossom and the greenest of their leaf. When I had once been recognised as a favourite attendant of the great man of the day, the newly-appointed governor of Bagdad, I was admitted as a chartered lounge wherever I chose to go. I took, as it happened, a peculiar fancy to Rustoom Beg’s garden, in the quiet seclusion of which I found fitter opportunity than elsewhere for the solitude that, naturally enough, I often desired; and no hindrance was put to my entering it and remaining there at any time or hour of the day. And thus it came about in this very garden that—but what good would there be in relating it? Lost is lost, to me at least,—let it rest.”

Here Hermann stopped short in his narration and looked down, with a flushed and troubled face.

Less intelligence than Tantawee possessed might, under the circumstances of the story and its teller, have sufficed to divine in a general way the nature both of the occurrence and of the loss thus alluded to by his young friend. He considered a moment, and then said, in a tone of studied cheerfulness,—

“What was it that happened to you there? Tell me, my dear fellow; you may rely on my keeping the knowledge of it to myself; and I for my part cannot consent to remain in ignorance of anything that so nearly concerns you, as, by your manner, this would seem to do.”

Having said this, he put his hand gently on Hermann’s shoulder, adding, “And then?” The request was, perhaps, dictated in part by curiosity, but more by the sincere sympathy which is proper to all large minds. Hermann felt and valued it, yet could scarcely even then bring himself to comply.

“Let me alone,” he answered without looking up. “I shall certainly break down and make a fool of myself if I try to tell it. Besides, it is useless to recur to it now; that cord has been cut for ever.”

“How are you so certain that it has been indeed cut? Surely she is not dead?” rejoined the Arab Beg, aiming a conjectural arrow in the dark.

Hermann suddenly raised his head. "Dead? no, I trust! God forbid that. But how did you come to say 'she'? who told you about her? Have you then heard any news of her? If so, for God's sake let me know it at once," he added with almost painful eagerness of voice and manner. Tantawee smiled.

"As if I needed," said he, "to be told in so many words that there was a woman of some sort in the affair; or to hope, for your sake anyhow, that she is yet alive and well. How should I know more? I, who am ignorant of her very name and parentage, that is, till you choose to tell me? Why, your own expressions, boy, have as good as acknowledged that you fell in love; and yet, from your tone in speaking of it, I see no reason why I should not hope that the object of your love is now alive." He then continued in a more serious manner, "Come, my brother; now that you have let me this far into the secret, you may as well make me your confidant for the rest. God is merciful; perhaps I may be of use to you even in this; 'Help cometh from whence thou knowest, and from whence thou knowest not'; must I,"—with a slight smile,—“quote the *Qoran* to you, who are so much better a Mahometan than myself?"

The German's face brightened up a little, but he made no direct reply. He looked silently over the ship's side, first towards the distant blue outline of the Syrian coast,

then just coming into sight above the low-lying haze of noon ; next he gazed into the dark-blue water close at hand under the ship ; at last, with an altered and somewhat thickened voice, which however cleared as he continued, he resumed his narrative.

“ More than a week had already passed since our first arrival at Diar-Bekr, when, one lovely morning, I felt irresistibly inclined to spend an idle hour or two in the garden I just now mentioned, there to enjoy at leisure the bright sun and the fresh air, of both of which there was a grievous deficiency in the khan where we lodged within the town. Sa’eed, who was always willing to do me a friendly turn, had promised that he would be at hand to attend the Pasha’s call, and replace me in case my services were required during my absence ; and our master’s easy temper might safely be relied on to take no serious notice of so immaterial a substitution.

“ This arrangement made, I went out alone in the town ; and, passing under the high-arched town gates, followed a narrow paved lane, fenced in by blind walls on either side, and dark with overhanging trees, till I reached a low door which gave a private and scarcely observable entrance into Rustoom Beg’s garden.

“ Here I wandered about in search of a quiet corner to sit in, and soon perceived at the further end of the enclosure, a good way off the Beg’s own house, a pretty

little kiosk, two storeys high. The green shutters of the windows were closed, and the entrance-door locked ; but, on looking up, I perceived that half the lower or ground storey was covered by a flat plaster roof, the other half only being crowned by the upper room. It now occurred to me that this open piece of roof, which was, I should say, only some twelve or thirteen feet distant from the ground, would, of all others, be the place best fitted for my present purpose, namely, the combined enjoyment of solitude, laziness, and fresh air ; while its seclusion seemed likely to secure me against any untimely disturbance. One difficulty only remained ; the inside was shut, and there were no steps on the outside by which to get up ; but, for my good luck, there grew not far from the wall of the kiosk a tall pear-tree, and the branches sloped most conveniently towards the building. So, clambering up the tree till I came to the nearest point of approximation, I half dropped, half sprang on the terrace. Once there, I took a survey of my position.

“It commanded a lovely, though not an extensive, view. The height of the roof itself, joined to the slightly rising ground on which the summer-house was built, enabled me just to overlook the low fruit-trees and their tangled branches, which now formed a mottled network of bursting spring : white, pink, and tender green, all over the

garden. Close by me, one great tree,—I fancy I see it yet,—a sort of Persian acacia, towered far above the rest, and thrust forth heavy spikes of lilac flowers amid its exuberant leaves; elsewhere a few aspiring boughs started up at random between me and the further horizon, but did not wholly conceal it.

“On one side, the left, I could distinguish, a good hundred yards off, the lattices and painted walls of Rustoom Beg’s house, partly visible through the openings in the foliage; but by a little care in selecting my post, I found that I could put the impenetrable mass of the acacia-tree between myself and any danger of observation from that quarter. On the other side, near my right, was the brown stone and earth wall of another garden, even more thickly planted, it seemed, than that in which I was; and from thence, through a screen of vigorous evergreens, mingled with rose-bushes and other shrubs, and full of chirping fluttering birds, I could hear issuing the fitful plash of a running fountain. Beyond this second garden stretched a long house-roof, just showing a range of windows apparently belonging to a haram, for all were closely latticed. A small white minaret, that of some suburban mosque, peeped over the roof-line; there were no other signs of buildings in that quarter.

“But in front of where I stood, looking towards the south-east, a break among the rounded clusters of the

tree-tops indicated where flowed the rapid Tigris,¹ now in its spring-flood; and further on I caught silvery gleams of the river-windings here and there; more distant rose on the extreme plain the blue summits of the Karajah-Dagh range, bare and sharp from out the dark thickets that patched the mountain-sides. Of the town itself hardly anything was visible; the small upper room, against the wall of which I leaned, but into which I could not obtain entrance, shut it out from view."

Here Hermann abruptly broke off. Then, "You may wonder, perhaps," he said, "I almost do so myself, at my minute remembrance of all these objects and circumstances; but the fact is that I have so often re-pictured them every one in my imagination, that forgetfulness of the smallest detail would be much more difficult to me than memory."

He paused; but Tanṭawee said nothing, awaiting in silence till the narrator should of himself resume his tale, which, though not without an evident effort, at last he did.

"The sun was warm as well as bright. I drew back from the heat of its rays into the shade afforded by the

¹ The Arab name is Dijleh, but I substitute the other, because better known.

acacia on my right hand, seated myself comfortably with my back against the upper chamber wall, lighted a small travelling-pipe which I usually carried about with me, and felt—for one who had so lately been a European and a Christian—very Mahometan, Oriental, and imaginative.

“Through the light curls of blue smoke that hung before me slowly widening in the still warm air, the world seemed to lie open at my feet. I was young, strong, healthy, and—at any rate I thought so, smile as you may—handsome, clever, and perfectly fearless. Why should not I, as so many others had already done, make the East my home, its customs my customs, its people my people, its prophet my prophet, and its God my God?—here Tantawee smiled in good earnest, but with a very sarcastic smile—why not win its fortunes, and live its best and most prosperous life? To have commenced my career as a slave, was, I already knew, no obstacle ; a help, rather, to the highest success.

“Then my mood changed, though why I could not tell, and another train of thought succeeded. It carried me back to the Saxon townlet of my birth, and my father’s old house near the gate ; the half-wild garden around me recalled to my mind, as though in bitter irony, the careful cultivation of our commonest fields ; the crumbling plaster of the kiosk walls at my side contrasted with the memory of the well-maintained neatness

of our poorest dwellings ; the Karajah mountains conjured up before me the Carpathians ; the Tigris brought back the Danube. How loved and lovely those ! how weary these ! I remembered, too, the intelligent converse, the prudent forethought, the steady diligence of our German townsmen ; the busy honesty, the healthful home-life of our villagers ; and all the bright visions of but a minute past were dimmed, and faded away as I sadly thought how one hour of such life, now mine no longer, one acre of Europe, were in truth worth more than long years of dreamy Eastern listlessness, and a whole kingdom of unfertilized unprofitable Asia.

“ This mood, also, as the former had done, passed over me like the swell of a deep ocean wave on a calm day, and did not return. I knew not that it was the death-throe of a past life, the birth-throb of a new one.

“ Meanwhile, two hours must have elapsed, during which time I had filled and smoked three pipes, and had finally settled down into a state of mind neither precisely desponding nor cheerful, but calm, somewhat serious, and, on the whole, inclining to a not ungrateful melancholy. I was in a manner at home, yet a stranger ; I had many hopes, but many regrets also.

“ Noon drew on ; the sun mounted higher and higher ; the birds were silent under the leaves ; the shadow of my acacia-tree narrowed up against the wall, and the hot

glare was fast encroaching on the shelter in which I sat. I began to think that it was time for me to return to matter-of-fact life, and to see what my companions were after, and whether the Pasha might not have discovered and been displeased at my absence ; but I felt too lazy to do so at once, and half wished that some one would come to fetch me off, and so give me an immediate motive for quitting my retreat.

“ While thus undecided, and idly lingering on from one minute to another, I heard a sound as of several voices in the garden : not Rustoom Beg’s garden, but that on the other side of the wall, on my right. At first I scarcely gave them any attention ; but they continued, and sounded so lively and cheerful, that my curiosity was ultimately awakened. So I rose, and coming forward to the extreme edge of the roof, gazed over the nearer fruit-trees into the dense mass of green spread out beyond, whence the voices, which by their tone did not seem to be those of men, or even of women, but rather of girls at play, proceeded more distinctly than before. A kind of furrow-like depression in the bough-tops indicated that the trees thereabouts were parted into a narrow avenue, and a thick clump at the hither end looked like the leafy dome of a natural arbour.

“ Gazing down where the foliage was thinner, and the boughs interlaced less jealously over the path beneath, I

discerned, much to my satisfaction, the glance of figures, female beyond a doubt, in light-coloured dresses, moving to and fro; while, from the rapid changes in their posture, and the frequency of their bright sudden laugh, I conjectured them, and rightly, to be engaged in some girlish sport. Whoever the players might be, they were certainly quite unconscious of being overlooked; and I had full leisure to watch their game as best I might, not without a growing eagerness for a better view. It was some time before I obtained it; at last, through a gap in the leaves, I caught sight of a face, a tolerably pretty one, but—oh! disappointment—of a dusky brown colour, an Abyssinian's, it seemed. As it happened, the eyes were fortunately directed elsewhere, and did not take cognizance of me. 'Girls,' said I to myself, 'and, beyond question, belonging to the big house yonder; they have, I suppose, come out of the haram¹ for a romp in the garden: only slave-girls after all; that dark-skinned young lady is evidently one of the category. Best so, perhaps, since thus I run no serious risk by prying.'

"With somewhat abated interest I continued to watch the leafy openings; not, however, in hopes of seeing through them anything much superior to what had al-

¹ The rooms allotted exclusively to female and domestic uses.

ready appeared, and intending soon to descend from my look-out, and return as I had come. I was mistaken—fatally mistaken, some would say—you for one, perhaps. I will not say so.

“The very next face that came, as though in a framework of foliage and flowers, before me, was as fair as the first had been dark,—only the hair, the eyebrows, and the eyes were deep brown, almost black, and the cheeks ruddy with health. Round the white forehead, and noosing the long tresses behind, ran a slender band of crimson velvet, sealed with gold; gold ornaments also were tangled in the glossy hair. Of form and stature I could at the moment distinguish nothing, except a few gleams of a white dress, indistinctly seen through the net-like boughs; but I felt sure that the beauty unseen fully corresponded to that on which I now for the first happy time fed my eyes,—they had never been so fed before.

“Everything else disappeared around me. I was still gazing—and how could a lad of scarcely eighteen years refrain from gazing on that perfect face?—praise be to Him who created it!—forgetful in my eagerness alike of caution and concealment; when by chance—if, indeed, chance it was, and not rather destiny, hers and mine—the girl’s eyes turned in the direction where I half stood, half crouched forward on the narrow roof, and looked

full into mine. An instant after she had moved away, and was hidden from my sight among the trees. A pause followed ; then I heard a voice, her voice I was sure—a clear, bright voice, like that of a singing bird—calling out something, but what I could not understand, to the companions of her play. Whatever the words may have been, their meaning was soon made evident by the result ; for, after a few moments of seemingly capricious hurry and bustle, betrayed by the irregular movements of the shaken sprays overhead, there was a pattering sound as of many footsteps retreating in the direction of the house.

“When every one else was gone, and all was quiet around, she, the same, came gently, almost stealthily, forward to an opening among the trees, and fixed her gaze steadily on me, scanning me with calm, deliberate inquiry ; while I, emboldened by I knew not what hope, leaned towards her from the low roof-parapet, with a look undoubtedly expressive of the admiration I felt. When she had well surveyed me, she smiled,—not passingly, but with a purposed smile of satisfied good-will ; then waited till I, recovering in a measure my dazed perceptions, acknowledged with look and gesture the meaning of her smile. She then turned her face upwards, and pointing with her finger, slowly moved it along the sky till it indicated the quarter of the afternoon sun ; raised

both hands a little to each side of the head¹ and looked inquiringly towards me. Love's guesses are quick, but sure; I understood that she meant to designate the period of 'Aṣr,² and that she and I might then have an opportunity of meeting: gladly I nodded intelligence and assent. Once more she smiled—a smile of joyous cheerfulness that would alone have sufficed to enslave a heart much more difficult of conquest than mine—and instantly after disappeared amid the grove. I waited, without thought or motion, till the last real or fancied indication of her presence had vanished from sight and hearing; even then I remained where I was standing for a few minutes longer on my now lonely watching place, dazzled with sunlight, hope, and love.

“Rousing myself at last by the remembrance of the promised afternoon, I scrambled down to the ground, and, carefully avoiding the risk of observation, crept back out of the enclosure, whence, with superfluous circuitousness, I made my homeward way to the khan. There I learnt from Sa'eed that no inquiries had been made about me during my three hours of absence: so far all was well. Next followed an interval of strange

¹ The position assumed by those who make the Mahometan call to prayer.

² 'Aṣr is half-way between noon and sunset; it is the third of the five times appointed for daily prayer among Mahometans.

unreality, most like a waking dream, in which my outer self was conversing with my travelling comrades about their morning doings, and saying as little as possible about my own, while with the others I partook of our customary noonday curds, bread, and white cheese ; and afterwards sat with them idly smoking a nargheelah, during the dead time of day between noon and 'Aṣr, in a room that seemed to me like a closed prison, and hours that would not come to an end. Inwardly I was occupied all the time in devising some plausible pretext for slipping away again alone unobserved. Pasha, master, journey, comrades, and the rest had suddenly become for me mere unmeaning phantoms ; and the only truth of life seemed to be in that garden, across that wall.

“Unable to bear it longer, I made some unmeaning excuse for my restlessness, and left the khan a good half hour before the appointed moment. Traversing town and gardens I reached the inclosure, which I entered, not by the door as hitherto, but through a broken-down aperture in the wall, near the kiosk. No need to say how guardedly, how cautiously, I crept on between bush and tree, how I dreaded to meet some servant, some gardener, anybody ; a dog even would have alarmed me. Luckily everything lay hushed and quiet in the warm sleepy afternoon ; neither men nor dogs were stirring.

"With greater circumspection than I had used the time before, I clomb the pear-tree by the kiosk side, dropped warily on the roof, and waited with anxious impatience the call to the prayers of 'Aṣr; though not exactly, I allow, with the intention of taking part in them myself. One moment I feared that they must somehow be over, and have passed unobserved: the next, that by some strange and unprecedented chance they would never be announced that day. So I sat, my eyes riveted on the upper gallery of the minaret just visible above the roof-line of the house—her house, as I now was aware; till, after what appeared to me an endless delay, I saw a figure, dark-cloaked and white-turbaned, issue slowly from the little side door of the tower, and pause awhile; then it raised its hands and uttered the *Iḍan*,¹ the welcome cry, that burst almost simultaneously out, from distance to distance, over the entire town where it lay hidden behind me. But minaret, crier, and prayers, were no longer anything to me; I had now neither ears nor eyes, except for the well-noted spot in the adjoining garden; and in its direction sight and hearing were stretched, but at first to no purpose.

"Five minutes, hours I thought then, passed; then

¹ The call, "God is most great," and the rest, with which Mahometans preface every act of public worship.

some way off to the left, I heard a faint rustle, a footfall ; next a small white pebble was thrown over the garden-wall from the same direction ; an instant later, a second pebble followed ; and a low chirp, resembling the call of a wood-bird, was thrice repeated. Without hesitation, I crept softly down from the terrace, and regained the ground ; then went crouching along close under the wall towards the spot designated by the fall of the pebbles. The earth was damp in shadow, and the high reedy grass, and spreading bramble-bushes that sprung up here, would have sufficed to screen me from view had there been spies at hand ; but there were none.

“Following on I came unexpectedly to what must once have been a gateway of communication between the two gardens, but had since been roughly blocked up with large unmortared stones ; one of these had been recently displaced, and a fresh green spray had been thrust through the crevice, so as to cross my path, and compel my notice. I stopped, removed the bough, and, peeping through the narrow aperture, discovered the peculiar whiteness of a female dress on the other side ; while I heard an encouraging ‘Bismillah,’¹ gently whis-

¹ “In the name of God,” a phrase with which Mahometans inaugurate every action, whether intending to perform it themselves, or inviting others to do so.

pered, in a tone that to my ears gave it the more special meaning of 'Come, I am here waiting for you.'

"To wrench out and to lay aside, noiselessly though quickly, a few more of the uncemented fragments, was the work of hardly a couple of minutes. A sufficient opening was formed. I crept through, found myself on the inner side, regained my feet, and at the same instant, by my very first forward movement, held her whom I sought in my arms. She had drawn her veil over her face, and was standing quiet and wholly unexpectant of so impetuous a greeting. But my passionate curiosity, now wrought up by protracted expectation to its highest pitch, gave no time for check or parley; and all her laughing resistance did not hinder my raising the light gauze from her features, and saluting her,—as any lad of eighteen would have saluted any girl under like circumstances.

"On my life, Tanṭawee, believe me or not, I had thus far intended nothing more. I did not know my own heart; I knew hers still less. A boyish freak, an adventure, a stolen kiss, a laugh, a short hour's pleasant chat, perhaps another kiss at parting, and so home; if I had anything in my mind, that was all. But when, hastily disentangling herself from my hold, she drew back with a gesture of disapproval, and I saw her there before me, her unveiled face all in a glow, and looking

half astonished reproof, half smiling pardon, I was at once abashed, overcome, entranced, enslaved, and"—Hermann added slowly and in an undertone—"enslaved, come what may, for ever. I blushed till I felt my very scalp burn; and stood mute and helpless in her presence, like one waiting his award of death or life from a word, a sign; without thought, will, or being of my own but what she might herself please to give me."

"Very lover-like, if not very wise," interposed Tantara; "and good proof that either you were very susceptible, or she very beautiful; or both, perhaps. Can you describe her to me?"

Hermann replied,—“I have already told you that she was fair, bright-complexioned, dark-haired, and dark-eyed; further, she was tall, nearly of my height; her age about two years less than mine, that is, scarce sixteen. God!” he added with a vehement outburst, “what shall I say of her, what should I say? Words can only dishonour that perfect beauty.

“With a look that at once implied command and imposed caution, and putting her finger on her lips, she made me a sign to follow her. We went on through a thick tangle of laurel-bushes, she leading the way, and always keeping close to the wall, till we reached a sort of recess, formed by the ruin of what must once have been a small outhouse, now more than half un-

roofed, and branched over by garden-trees on every side ; a little clambering over a fragment of wall brought us into the interior : it was an absolute hiding-place. Once within, my guide seated herself, and indicated to me a place close beside her. I sat down, but did not venture to speak first.

“ ‘ You are one of Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo’s men, are you not ? ’ she asked.

“ I answered, ‘ Yes.’

“ ‘ Tell me, then, your history ; who you are, whence you came, and how you were brought into his service. I have heard,’ she continued, ‘ the strangest stories about you, and I wish to know the truth from yourself. Speak out, my brother, fear nothing. I am your sister, and will not betray you to harm ; do you doubt me ? ’

“ She spoke gently, affectionately ; every word of hers, but most ‘ brother,’ and ‘ sister,’ thrilled me with a flow of life unknown to me before. Yet there was in her manner a something of decision and authority, which would have of itself obliged me, even had I been less inclined than I was, to give her, as I now unhesitatingly did, an exact though concise account of my past years, and more particularly of the circumstances which had resulted in bringing me to Diar-Bekr.

“ When I had finished, she smiled her own sweet smile ; said, ‘ I knew already from your looks that you

could not fail to be of good race and family ;' and gave me her hand.

"I kissed it, this time not less respectfully than lovingly ; and, still holding it in mine, for she did not withdraw it, said, 'And now, my sister, I have told you all about myself ; but who are you ?'

" 'I am,' she answered, 'the daughter of the Sheykh¹ Asa'ad the Sheybanee. They call me Zahra' ; and my father is by marriage connected, though he hardly likes to own it, with Rustoom Agha, the very same on the roof of whose kiosk I saw you this noon. The house and garden in which you now are belong to us ; but the greater portion of our land lies westerly, all along the river, below the bridge. And,' she added laughingly, 'that your curiosity may be fully satisfied, 'I have two elder brothers, but no sister.'

" 'Asa'ad the Sheybanee,' I repeated ; 'that is not a Turkish sounding name.'

" 'Certainly it is not,' she replied, with a look almost of contempt ; 'it is Arab, and of the best of the Arabs. Our family,' she went on, 'is a principal one among the great tribe of Benoo-Sheyban ; a branch, if you know it not, of the famous Rabeeah Clan, settled here from the

¹ A title given to any elderly and respectable man of a tribe, but not necessarily implying authority.

oldest times, long before the Prophet; and of whom a few families yet survive in these northern lands, untainted by Turkish or Persian blood; and of such are we.'

"'Dearest Zahra', my sister, my love,' said I, 'be of what race and family you may, you are for me the noblest as the loveliest upon earth.'

"She laughed again. 'My little brother Ahmed, you are yet a stranger in these our countries; wait a few years more, and you will begin to understand the true value of blood, and what is noble, what base. Meanwhile, to our family pride you are already indebted for thus much, that I am here on the present day to meet you; otherwise,' with something of a sigh, 'it might not have been so.'

"Eagerly I inquired her meaning. After some reserve on her part, which yielded only to the impetuosity of my questioning, she told me that she had been for a long while past repeatedly demanded in marriage by Beks and Aghas,¹ of the land; but that the Sheykh, her father, holding all these visitors for little better than 'Ajem,² had rejected them, and instead had betrothed her to a

¹ The former of these titles corresponds more or less to our "Sir," and is most often hereditary; the latter to our "Esquire," and is personal; both have a semi-military significance.

² Barbarians.

distant cousin from among their own tribe of Benoo-Sheyban, now among lances and camels in the uplands of Nejd.¹ In a word, to a well-to-do young Bedouin chief, by name the Emeer² Daghfel; who was on some future day to come and claim her for his own, and take her with him back to the south. For the moment, a family feud, no rare occurrence in the tribe, had delayed the favoured cousin's arrival at Diar-Bekr; but he was expected there towards the end of the year, or, at furthest, in the following spring.

"All this she explained to me in a very simple matter-of-fact way, yet hesitatingly at times, and with an evident reluctance that appeared to have for object quite as much the facts themselves, as the recounting of them. While she was speaking I remained silent, stupidly gazing at the chequered sunlight on the wall of the shed, but inwardly in a tumult of passion that increased every moment. A thousand projects crossed my mind, countless plans and chances; all alike fatal to the hopes of my Arab rival—for such I already considered the Emeer Daghfel, God curse him!—and favourable to my own; and all alike impossible. After a pause she turned towards me.

¹ Central Arabia, the word means "highlands."

² This is a title of authority given to the head or leader of a clan.

“‘My dear brother,’ she resumed in a more cheerful, yet a tender tone; ‘what are you so deep in thought about? Why do you torment yourself with these things? What will be, will be. Let the present suffice, the future belongs to God.’

“As she spoke, I leaned somewhat forward, and looked her full in the face. There was a new glow on her cheek, a brightness in her eye. I could not, all inexperienced as I was, consciously read their meaning, but I felt it; and I knew within myself that which my reasoned thoughts could neither comprehend nor reach.

“‘The present!’ I exclaimed, ‘let it suffice! you tell me. But, O my sister, answer me, in God’s name answer me, what is then the present?’ I choked as I said it.

“‘It is yours, all yours, Ahmed, my brother.’ She dropped her look with the words. Her hand, white, slender, yet firmly knit, lay in mine; I pressed it; the pressure was returned.

“‘Zahra’!’ She raised her head; her eyes met mine. ‘Zahra’, do you love me?’ Both her hands were clasped between mine as I said it.

“‘I do,’ she answered.

“All was still; the head of each leaned on the other’s neck. Hope, fear, thought, past, future, everything had

vanished from before me ; I only knew that I was loved—that I loved, and was happy.

“The sun-rays at our feet moved upwards, and glowed full on us where we sat. Again, but now with greater freedom of feeling and speech, we were engaged in talk and laugh, in question and answer ; we seemed to be really brother and sister brought up together from childhood. You smile incredulously, Tanṭawee ; but I tell you that such was the entire excellence of her maiden purity, such the simple dignity of her undoubting frankness, that instead of being tempted to presume on her avowed affection, I now became more than ever ashamed of my own first boyish coarseness of demeanour ; and imagined her, or anyhow thought that I imagined her, a newly-acquired sister, in whom I felt, revived and intensified tenfold, all the long-repressed affections and memories of family and home. It was not only thus, it was far more, but I did not know it then ; I knew it afterwards, but not that hour nor that day.”

“Jameel and Botheynah, or Mejnoon-’Aamir and Leyla¹ over again,” remarked Tanṭawee. “To make love with much warmth, yet more self-restraint ; to be content to give and receive the assurance of longing

¹ Celebrated Arab lovers ; Jameel and Mejnoon were both first-rate poets.

love alone, without hope of attainment, as though the mind were everything and the body nothing ; and thus to remain through every vicissitude of life, constant to honour in spite of opportunity, to virtue in spite of passion, and to attachment in spite of separation, however prolonged ; and all this till the hour of death itself, an hour welcomed as the seal of inviolable fidelity. This is a thing, I believe, of no rare occurrence among Arab youths and maidens ; at least it was so before the gross lessons of Mahometan materialism. Indeed those lessons have been but partially learnt even now, thank Heaven, by the Arab tribes in their own native land ; though thoroughly appreciated and practised by Turks, Koordes, Persians, and their like. The wonder to me is, not that your Zahra' should have been such, but how her refinement and self-command communicated themselves to, or at least subdued, your coarser European nature."

Hermann listened thoughtfully ; then continued.

"All this I understood afterwards, and I felt it even then, indistinctly indeed, yet enough to impose on me a sense of bashfulness, mixed with a kind of awe, as for a superior being, which intensified while it repressed the daring of more passionate desire. But I was less disposed to analyse than to enjoy. Enough ; we remained thus, forgetful, I at least, of the world and all belonging to it outside of our happy hiding-place ; till

the lengthening sunbeams, breaking in more and more level through the leafy screen around us, warned us of approaching evening. She was the first to give the sign of parting.

“‘And when again, dearest Zahra?’” said I, as I clasped her hands within mine.

“‘Not to-morrow,’ she answered; ‘there might be danger; but the day after, early in the morning, at the first call to prayer¹ you will find me here.’”

“I pleaded hard for a meeting the very next day; but she instead repeated her cautioning, and warned me against rashness, and the perils that it might bring upon us both; while I could not but admit that she knew best. Reluctantly I assented to the more distant date. We rose; she held out her hand; I kissed it; then, urged by a sudden impulse which I could not resist, I clasped her once more in my arms. She sighed, then smiled, and returned my embrace. Stooping down, I snatched a small blue flower from the ground close by, and thrust it into the breast-fold of her dress. She looked round an instant for something to reciprocate the pledge; then hastily detached a thin gold coin from among the many plaited in her long dark hair, and gave it me: I shall carry it to my grave, if I ever have one.”

¹ About an hour and a quarter before sunrise.

Hermann broke off, and, with a half instinctive movement, put his hand to his breast, paused, and then more deliberately drew out a little leather pouch, black and embroidered with gold; it was carefully sewn up, and a slender silver chain secured it about his neck. In silence he kissed it, and slowly returned it to its place; then looked down over the ship's side, and drew his hand twice or thrice across his face.

"Poor boy!" said Tantawee.

Both were silent for a few minutes. Hermann then looked up again, and resumed.

"I could go on for ever with the story of those days, the twelve days that followed,—so fresh in my memory is every incident, every word, every look; but it would do me little good, and would interest you still less. A dream, however vivid, remains, when told, a dream only, at least for the hearers; and who cares for another man's dreams? Let me then pass over in words that which never can pass from my heart:—it is my heart.

"We met five times more, always in the same place, and each time with increasing, deepening love; yet in outward demonstration we were always true to ourselves, she naturally and of herself, I from her influence; and we never overpassed the self-imposed limits of our first hour. She was my sister, I her brother,—she my queen, I her slave. Such was my dream, hers too

perhaps; the hour of waking had not yet arrived, certainly not for me.

“But the future? How were we to maintain mutual knowledge of each other’s state, and even of our whereabouts? My own departure was near; and, besides, her betrothed suitor might arrive sooner than expected? What assurance was there then of our meeting again? and under what circumstances should we meet,—she and I? and what would be in the end of it? We discussed many plans,—most of them of my imagining rather than hers,—but could arrange nothing feasible. We could only refer ourselves to chance, destiny, Providence,—what you will,—and agree to be satisfied in the meantime as best we might with remembrance, and with the unshaken assurance that no separation, no change, could diminish our love. I, for my part, bore it much worse than she did, or outwardly seemed to do. Whatever may have been—were, indeed, as I afterwards learnt too well—her feelings, she veiled their intensity under a calm that was wholly beyond me. Had I been less sure of her heart, I might almost have imagined her indifferent to our parting. Grievously should I have wronged her; it was only the quiet composure of a strong, deep nature, too sure of itself to acknowledge the possibility of being influenced by circumstance and change. Of the two I was much the less manly, and

continued to suggest many wild and impracticable schemes, which she gently put aside.

“‘Till my cousin, the Emeer, arrives,’ said she, ‘I shall have no difficulty in keeping my own; and while here, I am to all intents mistress of myself and of my doings; nor do I think that there is much likelihood of his coming this year. It is certain that summer will have set in before matters can have quieted down among the clans in Nejd, and then Daghfel and his party must needs defer their journey hitherward till the cooler season. They will not be at Diar-Bekr, I can vouch for it, till next spring, at soonest. Meanwhile, you, Ahmed,—clever, brave, handsome, likely lad that you are,—ought, if all goes right, to have got your freedom before the year is out, and then—’

“She paused, and continued in a lower voice,—‘No lock, you know, but patience has the key. You will, in one way or other, find out where I am; and be well assured that, tide what may, I shall ever be the same for you, Ahmed, my brother! my love!’

“She broke off, as if unwilling to trust herself longer to words. She had already given me, and I had noted down, the names of some Arab kinsmen of hers in the neighbourhood of Bagdad, from whom I might, by inquiry, get such general information about her people as would, united with the knowledge previously acquired,

suffice to keep me acquainted with the leading circumstances of the family, and thus indirectly with her own.

“‘I shall cry often and bitterly till we meet again,’ said I. ‘Will you cry for me, Zahra?’ I do not think you will.’

“‘Yes, I shall; not much, perhaps, for I am not usually given to crying,’—the tone of her words was cheerful, almost sportive, and I felt half ashamed of myself,—‘but I shall always think of you, day and night. We shall meet again yet.’

“I could not answer her; my words, my breath itself, were stifled in my throat. One last embrace, and we had parted. Under the broad grey dawn, now rapidly brightening into sunrise, I crept back through the garden and along the well-known lane; but all around me looked changed and strange. It seemed to me that at every step my very soul was being wrenched out of me,—as though it had been fixed there where I left her, and I had to pass on, moving, yet dead, soulless, lifeless.”

“Poor fellow!” again interjected Tanṭawee. And then—“Love at first sight, as in the stories.”

“I have often since thought that over,” said Hermann, “and wondered whether the common saying,—‘Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight?’—be

true in the ordinary run of cases, as it certainly was in mine. I know that in popular tales, such as are nightly recited to the audience of the *kahwah*, or at daytime in the street, the first meeting of those whom pre-existent sympathy in some former state of being, as you I suppose, would explain it, or, to my thinking, the more matter-of-fact bias of mind, or matter, or both, in this world of ours, has determined for lovers, is of course a very important event, a sort of turning-point in life (though, indeed, life is, to say truth, all turning-points, only most often unremarked), not to be lightly passed over or feebly sketched in story.

"My own instance," he continued, "did certainly correspond with the favourite romance-type, that of 'Antarah, or Ghareeb,'¹ and other heroes of tradition and the 'Thousand and One Nights.' Only I cannot but observe that all these are made-up histories ; and in such it becomes necessary to introduce the lovers and their love, not less to the hearers, than to each other ; a thing best done by a sudden and startling surprise,—a passion flaring up into full blaze the instant it has been kindled ; and to this necessity of the narrator, rather than to the truth, I set down the wonderful efficacy which they

¹ Two well-known Arab characters, famous in stories of love and war.

attribute to first sight in almost every romance. But in real life I imagine that the whole matter is often very common-place, and so gradual that it is hardly noticed by the persons themselves, or even by those about them. And thus it may happen,—does, I suspect, happen in four instances out of five,—that Mejnoon and Leyla¹ have met and conversed together some ten, twenty, fifty times even before the first dream of love interrupts the previously total slumber of that capricious passion.”

Tanṭawee listened patiently; then said, “You are getting as far out of my depth as, thank God, out of my experience; still, so far as I can manage to understand your theory, I do not agree with it. On the contrary, what happened to you is, from all I hear on these matters, much the more common order of things, anyhow where love is concerned; marriage, as every one knows, is quite a different affair.”

“In these countries,” replied Hermann, “you may very likely be right; but I was thinking of the subject in a more general way. Though I was only a lad when kidnapped from Rosenau, I had already lived there long enough to see and to understand much of what went on about me, and to form a tolerably distinct idea of our

¹ The names of these two have become proverbial in the East for sudden and passionate love.

own country manners and social condition ; besides, it is a topic on which I have often reflected since.

“Now in Europe, you may perhaps have heard, there is no fixed barrier, or at most only a very slight one, between the every-day intercourse of the sexes ; they inhabit the same rooms, sit at the same table, eat together, work together, play together ; they are familiar with each other’s faces even before they have learned to think, let alone to love ; and the sight of a pretty girl has nothing in it to startle or overpower a youth of seventeen ; unless, indeed, the beauty be very uncommon, or the circumstances exceptional. He and she, if of similar rank and station, have been trained at long hand to look on each other, first as playmates, then, it may be, as fellow scholars, as every-day companions, as friends ; and thus the transition from acquaintance to love is imperceptible, step after step ; it follows on thought and trial ; nay, the intention of falling in love often, I believe, precedes the fact itself. Prosaic, you will say. It is not the less true though ; and from my remembrances, however boyish, of Rosenau, Kronstadt, and the rest, I can assure you that what I have just described is generally the fact, at least among us Saxons.”

“Very sensible, no doubt, though a trifle flat,” rejoined Tanṭawee ; “you, Aḥmed, however, seem to have behaved like anything but a genuine Saxon in this

respect, nor do I fancy that you would find many such prudent lovers as you make out those of your kith and kin to be, along the banks of the Tigris or among the palm-groves of Nejd."

"It is custom of life, not coldness of blood, that makes the difference with us," answered Hermann, not wishing his friend to form too low an estimate of the national heart, or of his in particular. "And it is, I think, precisely owing to the dissimilarity of social usage and intercourse that love here, in these Eastern regions, takes a different course."

"How do you mean?" asked his friend.

"I mean," said Hermann, "that in lands like those around us, or rather, alongside of us,"—giving a glance towards the Syrian coast, the low purple outline of which had all that morning rimmed the sea-margin on the right, and now grew distincter every hour,—“In lands, I mean, where religion, or custom rather, has made social separation between man and woman the law, and intercourse the exception, one of two extremes must ordinarily follow. Either love cannot properly be said to exist at all from first to last, but is represented after a fashion by a passive acquiescence in the pre-arranged ordinances of parents and relatives, with now and then a tolerable attachment, more often absolute indifference, very rarely actual love, for its ultimate result; or the passion, dor-

mant before, suddenly opens its eyes to find itself full-grown in presence of some fortuitous hap. This may easily happen where a youth and a girl, having already reached an age capable of love in its fullest sense, and having never before loved or even met,—because never intended so much as to see each other, far less to love,—do yet by unforeseen circumstances come to meet. Then it is that the one meeting, by the very fact of its being unpremeditated and first, makes its entire impression at a blow, and becomes in good earnest the opening scene in a love romance, to end, not unfrequently, in a tragedy. For while the former, that is, the family contract proceeding, may be called the legitimate and regular method among you—I mean us—Muslims, the latter is, on the contrary, unauthorized, and in a manner illegal, love; nor is its course likely to run smoothly. Were it indeed all smooth, it would hardly be worth the following. And thus it fell out with Jameel and Botheynah, for instance, thus with Mejnoon-'Aamir and Leyla; and thus, too, it was with me."

To this somewhat lengthy exposition, Tāntawee Beg made no direct reply; his mind had, while Hermann talked, been running on from thought to thought in quite an opposite direction, and while thus engaged he had dropped his tobacco-pouch, so that he was just then busied in scraping together the tobacco from the deck,

and returning it to its proper place. Hermann, for his part, made no attempt to continue his social or psychological speculations; but quietly filled his own pipe, lighted it, and smoked awhile in silence.

The ship drifted lazily on before a gentle, southerly breeze, over a sea of oily calm. With the exception of the two friends, almost every one, crew and passengers alike, lay stretched upon the planks in afternoon sleep.

Tantawee was the first to speak. "These topics," said he, "lie rather out of my line; and I fear that even your Zahra' herself—do not scowl so, my dear boy, I meant nothing personal—would not have produced much effect on me; though I own that a pretty girl, in a pleasant garden, on a bright spring morning, must be something very seductive. But every man has his way. However, it is not her, but your own story and adventures that I care about, so pray go on with them. I am hungry and thirsty to learn all that befell you at Bagdad, and how you escaped safe thence when the Pasha was killed. I heard of it at the time, of course; it was talked of everywhere; but I know no more of the real motives and circumstances of that dark affair than other people do, that is to say, next to nothing. You, I should think, must be more in the secret."

"Unhappily I am," answered Hermann with a heavy sigh, and continued his narration.

“During the three weeks we spent at Diar-Bekr, I noticed a great change in everything connected with our master, the Pasha. While a suppliant in Constantinople, he had affected a modest, almost a humble, appearance : his dress was plain, his lodgings not much better than those of any ordinary traveller ; and the number of the attendants with whom he arrived at the capital scarcely amounted to twenty. It is true that the additions made there raised his suite to forty or so before we left ; but till the last, his men were for the most part purposely dispersed in out-of-the-way khans, and in distant quarters of Stamboul ; nor did they at any time appear all together till we had already left behind us some hours of the road between Scutari and Ismid on the other side of the water. Even during the long winter-journey through Anatolia, he seemed rather to avoid than to court notice ; and more than once we observed that he compelled our village guides to take us, much to our annoyance, by circuitous and fatiguing bye-paths, simply in order the better to elude the ostentatious hospitalities of sundry Begs, Pashas, Governors, and the like, whose residences happened to be situated at such or such localities on the main road.

“Now all was changed. Before we had been three days housed in Diar-Bekr, a troop of fifty horsemen, very dusty, Koordes by their faces, but dressed and equipped

after Arab fashion, with lances, swords, matchlocks, and pistols, arrived from Bagdad, to meet their lord the Pasha ; and the profound obsequiousness of their manner toward him enabled me to conjecture, and not inaccurately, the importance of the position he had already occupied in his native town, no less than the brilliancy of that which he was now on his way to assume.

“ But besides this, he seemed in Diar-Bekr itself, judging by the demeanour of the inhabitants of the place, to be, during his stay there, the only person of note in the town. Visits, invitations, cavalcades, every mark of honour and respect were the order of the day. The higher the local dignitaries, the more eager they seemed to court his favour ; and even the common people, ranged in self-formed lines before the shops or along the roadside as he passed, saluted him with scarcely less reverence than they would have done the Sultan himself.

“ It is a fine thing to be governor of a province in the East, thought I, as I recalled to mind the comparative simplicity and scant attendance of our own more restricted officials. Yet I had when a child seen an Archduke of the Roman Empire make his public entry at Kronstadt, amid troops, music, triumphal arches, and all manner of rejoicings. But the pomp which surrounded the Austrian Prince seemed, after a fashion, less personally his own ;

and the respect shown him by our Saxons and Hungarians could in intensity bear no comparison with that manifested by the Arabs and Koordes of Diar-Bekr for the representative of the Ottoman Government.

“As to the Pasha himself, his manner, courteous, staid, and distant, was that of a man who receives nothing more than his natural and fully expected due. When in public, his eyes were generally cast downward, and he seldom turned his head ; but if spoken to, he raised it, looked the speaker full in the face, and paused a little before answering, in a voice that effectually precluded any approach to familiarity. But although he conducted himself towards the outside world with so much reserve, not to say haughtiness, to us, his personal attendants, and to me in particular, he was on the whole more affable and even good-natured than before ; though not always easily pleased, and apt at times to fall into a violent passion, when things were not to his liking.

“At last, one forenoon, amid much horse-careering, pistol-firing, and wild tumult, and with a countless escort of respectful valedictory attendants, made up of Begs, Aghas, Siphæes,¹ Mollas, and what not, who all politely insisted on accompanying us for the first five miles of the way, we left Diar-Bekr. Of my own individual feelings

¹ The word here denotes land-owners on military tenure.

that day, known then to myself alone, I need not speak ; they left me but little heart for the share that I, perforce outwardly took in the joyous demonstrations and horsemanly freaks of my light-minded comrades. The pain which I now experienced was a different one from that which I had suffered when torn from house and home the year before ; it was more intense ; yet there was something inexpressibly delightful mingled with it ; and I cherished it, as I have seen a wounded panther hug the spear that transfixed him."

"Where did you see that," interrupted Tanṭawee.

"In the valley of Nejran, on the frontiers of Yemen," briefly answered Hermann ; then went on.

"For a short time we skirted the Tigris ; then the river wound away on our left, and we rode forward over gently undulating meadows, till the last minaret of Diar-Bekr had sunk behind the dark tree-line in the distance, undiscernible even to my lingering gaze. When our courtesy-escort had quitted us too, and our own band drew somewhat closer together, I observed that we now amounted to about a hundred horsemen. Before sunset we had reached the first entry of the long winding pass, or valley rather, leading to Mardeen ; and here, by a clear spring of cool water, we pitched our tents, which, backed up by a considerable pile of baggage unloaded from the camels,—for a whole string of these ugly but

useful beasts had been taken into our service at Diar-Bekr,—formed an imposing encampment.

“Next morning we were on our road again ; but it took us four entire days to reach Mardeen, our marching time being in general from sunrise till afternoon only ; the evening and night we rested, while the Pasha’s Koordish or Arab horsemen kept guard by turns. Nor was this by any means a superfluous precaution ; for the peasants of these lands are mostly robbers also whenever they have an opportunity of becoming so. This we ourselves experienced ; for one moonless night, the very last before our arrival at Mardeen, a whole band of these extemporised marauders came prowling about us in the darkness, till they had almost found, unperceived, an entrance among the tents. Luckily the alarm was given in time, and the robbers met a suitable reception ; several shots were fired and returned almost at random ; two only of our people were slightly hurt. Probably our assailants had suffered more severely, for they scrambled off, under cover of the night, through the rocks and brushwood, and we heard no more of them. But next morning we found thick trails of blood on the grass. The wounded or dead had been, we supposed, carried away by their associates ; less, perhaps, from mutual fidelity than from fear of detection. Much indignation was expressed on the occasion by the sub-Governor of

Mardeen, where we arrived a few hours later; and many were his proffers of search after the culprits. But our Pasha did not think it worth while to have any investigation made; and I now clearly see that he was right, though in my ignorance of the country I then wondered at what I esteemed his unaccountable apathy on the subject.

“I was much interested—indeed it was the first sight that gave me any pleasurable interest after our leaving Diar-Bekr—with the giant crag of Mardeen, and its wonderful castle crowning the summit; with the quaint stair-built town clinging to the yellow rock, and the heaped-up emerald foliage of the orchard below. Yet, fair as these scenes were, the comparatively monotonous view, now open for the first time, of the boundless plain beyond, and the sensation that I was entering on a land entirely new, brought me, by its very novelty, more relief than all the rest from the clinging thoughts which thus far haunted me by day and night on my way. The keenness, too, of first impressions must needs wear off by degrees, especially under the influence of a total change in all that surrounds.”

“And more especially still in boyish youth,” interposed Tanṭawee.

“True,” replied Hermann, “but only in part; youth is not the same for every one.” He continued,—

“Anyhow, there was nothing in the grassy expanse before us, broken only by the grey earth walls and dust heaps of some chance half-Arab village, or the mounded ruins of more populous ages past, that could in the least recall to eye or mind the varied landscape of Diar-Bekr, as we slowly traced our way by the lower or Nisibeen¹ road to the battlemented fortress of Jezeerah,² and re-joined the Tigris.

“Turbid and full, the river eddied here round the precipitous spur of the Joodee rocks³ on its left shore ; and we had some trouble about crossing, a feat accomplished by means of the keleks, or jar-supported rafts, proper to these regions. Our next prolonged halt (for at Mardeen we had only remained a day and a half) was Moşool, where we arrived two days later, and where, for the first time in my life, I learnt what heat meant ; for the She-look⁴ happened to be blowing, and clouds of fine warm dust filled the air.

¹ The ancient Nisibis.

² Also called Jezeerat-'Omar ; a small town on the right bank of the Tigris, half-way between Diar-Bekr and Mosool.

³ The mountain-range eastward is called “Joodee,” and is often, in Mahometan ideas, confounded with Mount Ararat, which bears the same name in the Koran.

⁴ The Arab name for Sirocco, sometimes, but erroneously, confounded with the “Semoom,” or “poison-wind,” which is peculiar to the desert.

“At Moşool¹ our reception was even more ceremonious than it had been at Diar-Bekr; and during eight days the uninterrupted honours of flattering, not to say servile, hospitality, hardly left us any repose. From the pasha down to the negroes, all of us were made much of, each by his set and after his fashion; in fact, every townsman, great or small, was ready to devote himself to our acquaintance and entertainment.

“Yet it was on the whole a heavy time for me; for no sooner was I in comparatively quiet quarters, and deprived of the immediate excitement and bustle of the journey, than the recollection of Diar-Bekr encompassed and shut me in; while an image—her image—stood before me, sad and half-reproachful, I thought, that I had left her thus alone; though, in very deed, I do not know how I could have done otherwise. In the midst of my merry companions, in street and *kaḥwah*, in mosque and *khan*, this image haunted me; till I was fain to get out alone among the grass-mounds without the town; and there, under the shadow of some broken cottage wall, the fleckless sky glowing overhead, and the lone waste before me, express to myself in such verse

¹ A large town, on the left of the Tigris, opposite the ruins supposed of Nineveh, and well-known to Europeans since Mr. Layard's researches in this neighbourhood.

as I could the feelings which else I knew not how to utter."

"Let me hear your verses,—that is, if you remember them," said Tāntawee. "I am aware that you are something of a poet; and I dare say that the genuineness of your feelings gave you skill to render them less inadequately than is ordinarily the case with rhymers. Love poetry in general seems to me pitifully artificial. Perhaps yours may have at any rate the merit—if merit it be in such a matter—of truth."

"Be it so," said Hermann, "here are some I have not forgotten; judge them as you will." And in a low voice, he recited the following lines:—

"She spoke no word, she made no sign :
Nor word nor sign was needed there.
I kissed the face upturned to mine,
I clasped that bosom passing fair,
I smoothed aside the tangled hair
That wandered o'er her forehead white ;
And drunk with love and pleasure then,
The sunshine on the wall was bright,
And happiest I of living men.

" 'Love, say thou lov'st me.' 'Is not this
Proof of my love? What wouldst thou more?'
And smile on smile, and kiss on kiss,
The sudden treasures of love's store,
And passion unsurmised before,

And joys that have no name on earth,
And the great ocean without shore,
Whence life and love and all has birth.

“And is it thou? and can it be?
How have I won so rare a prize?
How bloomed this flower, unsought by me,
Self-offered to unheeding eyes?
How rose this star on clouded skies
To usher in love’s better day?
O dearest joys, for ever last!
O loving heart, beside me stay!
O clasping arms, entwine me fast!”

“Passion enough, anyhow,” commented Tanṭawee, when Hermann had ended; “and more pity for you. A nature capable of intense happiness—and that yours was such I do not doubt,—is capable also of much misery. But continue your story.” Hermann complied.

“While at Moşool, an incident occurred, trifling in appearance, but important in its sequel. Sauntering one afternoon, idle and purposeless, through the narrow sook¹ of the town, I fell in with an Arab,—a Bedouin; he was strolling, like one half-astray, down the street in a direction opposite to mine, swinging his mihjan,² and

¹ An Arab market-place, or rather the quarter of a town occupied by shops.

² A light switch, generally of almond-tree, used by camel-riders in lieu of a horse-whip; a Bedouin is scarcely ever without one in his hands.

turning his head about from side to side with the furtive air proper to his race when within the circuit of brick walls, where they seem to suspect a trap in every house-door, and an enemy in every citizen.

"Suddenly he stopped, with a 'Hulloa, child!' evidently addressed to me.

"'What do you want of me?' I replied, in such Arabic—not overmuch, then, nor over correct—as I could muster.

"His answer, or rather his next query, was unintelligible to my ears, accustomed at best to the phrases and pronunciation of city life—both, as you know, very different from those of the desert. Turning to a bystander, a Moşool tradesman apparently, I begged him to act as interpreter between us; and by his help learned, after patiently waiting out what seemed more like a quarrel than a dialogue, that my Arab was one of the Benoo-Sheyban tribe, recently arrived here on cattle business; that he was now on his way to Diar-Bekr, where he had sheep to dispose of; and, that having conjectured me, from my style and equipments, to be one of the newly-arrived Pasha's attendants, and fresh from Diar-Bekr, he wished to obtain from me the latest news of his kinsman, the Sheykh Asa'ad, to whom he was the bearer of family tidings and greetings from Nejd.

“Through my improvised interpreter, I replied that I had indeed come from Diar-Bekr; that I had heard of his cousin,—uncle, it might be,—Sheykh Asa’ad; that I had seen him myself, in the divan of his neighbour, Rustoom Beg; and had left him, with all of his, thriving and in good health.

“I longed to make some counter-inquiries regarding the Emeer Daghfel and his movements; but the Bedouin, with the unceremonious abruptness usual among his like, was already turning away, satisfied with the information he had got; and to have detained him with questions that would have implied a strangely intimate acquaintance with family affairs, might have given rise to dangerous suspicion. So I let him go; and remained the rest of that day more anxious and abstracted than ever.

“Yet there was much around to occupy and divert my thoughts. Moşool is a curious place; it is the portal where North and South meet; and a more motley set than its inhabitants I never saw,—Arabs, Turks, Koordes, Jews, Persians, Indians, Mahometans, Pagans, Yezeedes, Christians, Shemseeyeh,—”

“What do you mean by Shemseeyeh?” interposed Tanṭawee.

“I do not exactly know myself,” was the answer; “they are a class of people much resembling the

ordinary Christians of these parts in outward appearance, men and women ; like them heavy-looking, and partial to heavy clothing. However they do not claim any kinship of blood or creed with the Christians of the place any more than with the Mahometans, but keep equally aloof from either ; nor do they ever marry except from among their own sect. I was told that they worship the sun, and thence their name ;¹ but I myself never saw them at their prayers, if they have any. Their principal dealings are with the Bedouins of the plain, who act as sheep-breeders and drivers on their account ; some of them own in this way considerable flocks and herds, and are rich enough."

"Well ; that will do for the Shemseeeyeh," replied Tanṭawee ; "and now, pray resume your own journey to Bagdad ; I am impatient to hear what happened there."

Hermann went on.

"We were soon on the road again, and our faces turned towards our ultimate destination, Bagdad. At Moşool we had been joined by a fresh score of the Pasha's personal retainers ; our horses had rested ; we were all in excellent condition, and—except perhaps myself—in first-rate spirits. But it took us nearly four

¹ " Shems " is the Arabic for sun.

weeks yet to reach our goal. The track, a wearisome one at any season of the year, had now become doubly so from the daily increasing heat; indeed, when once arrived among the hillocks of Kerkhook,¹ we betook ourselves to night travelling, by the light of the moon; or, if that failed us, guided by the white shimmer, never wholly absent from the trodden ways, amid the darkness around.

“Our greatest difficulty was, however, in crossing the river Zab,² now at its highest rise, swollen from bank to bank, and rushing down snow-cold from the Persian mountains, to mingle its waters with the warmer Tigris. Some of our baggage-beasts were lost here; and even our own rough-riders, though not new to exploits of this kind, had considerable difficulty in keeping themselves and their horses from being swept away by the flood which swirled and eddied around them, to the confusion alike of foot and hand and eye.

“Though I had never been in the like position before, I took kindly to it, and earned the applause of all, and the envy of many, by the unexpected boldness with

¹ A small town at about one-third distance on this stage of the high road.

² A very rapid river subject to great inundations in the spring, it flows from east to west, and falls into the Tigris, not far above Irbeel, the ancient Arbela of history.

which I dashed foremost into the water, and tracked out a fordable way ; while the others were more cautiously feeling out their depth, and bewildering themselves in the search after the shallower patches of the current. My horse was a good one, and bore me bravely. Yet certainly, when our master himself commended my daring, and praised me in presence of all as we stood once more gathered and dripping wet on the southern bank, neither he nor any one else guessed to what my courage was due. I had pictured to myself Zahra' on the opposite shore, and ridden straight for her."

"Nonsense," exclaimed Tanṭawee."

"Nonsense it may have been," replied Hermann ; "but nonsense of this kind is often the truest sense, and so it proved on this occasion.

"My master's good-will, already inclined towards me, was fairly acquired for ever after that day ; and the sturdy negro Sa'eed, who had followed me closely into the water more from anxiety for my safety than from any other motive, and had emerged almost abreast with me out of the foaming ripple on the further bank, rendered me from that time forward the homage of an esteem, sincere, because unalloyed by jealousy. So on we rode ; till the mounded heaps of Kerkhook lay behind us, and we entered on the great alluvial plain of the lower Tigris, the famed 'Irak of history.

“Meanwhile, our band kept on steadily augmenting by the accession of little detachments of the Pasha’s men, who were in waiting for us here and there upon the road. We could not have been much less than two hundred persons in all before our journey’s end. By this time the differences of temper, formerly frequent causes of quarrel, arising from our varied nationalities, Bagdadee, Koorde, Arab, Greek, Croatian, German, or Negro, had been tolerably rubbed off by the mutual friction of travel; and, with few exceptions, we were a merry lot. Illuminated by the rays of our master’s splendour, each one of us shone a miniature sun in his own eyes at least. The Pasha’s own immediate attendants, though most of them, like myself, purchased slaves, considered themselves much superior personages to the crowd of free horsemen; and were indeed looked up to by the others as such.

“Like my companions I soon learned to regard the toiling peasants and shop-keeping townsmen among whom we passed, with the patronising contempt due from a superior to an inferior caste. We graciously accepted their offerings; sometimes too, I must allow, we took them by anticipation. However, the strict discipline generally maintained among us by the Pasha—who, on the occurrence of any dispute between his men and the inhabitants had a habit, perhaps from a desire of popularity, perhaps from a sense of justice, of almost invari-

ably deciding in favour of the latter—kept us within reasonable bounds. Though fond of flattery and presents, and by no means incorruptible, subject to occasional outbreaks of severity, not to say cruelty, when irritated, Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo was steadily averse to unprovoked insult and wanton oppression of the weak, even where Christians, Jews, and such-like were in the case.”

Tanṭawee looked at the narrator and smiled, somewhat ironically but said nothing. Hermann continued.

“There was great stir at Bagdad on our arrival ; and an endless procession, horse and foot, came forth from the city to meet and greet us while we were yet a good ten miles distance from the walls.

“The *kaḍee*¹ preceded ; grave, white-bearded, and white-turbaned, a model of decorum ; his very horse looked virtuous. The rider’s slightly uplifted hand displayed a small *Ḳoran* ; to insinuate, no doubt, what the new Pasha and himself were supposed to regulate their conduct by. A long train of city dignitaries and grandees, mounted on high-blooded, gaily-caparisoned horses, more or less restive, followed in the rear. Coming up to us, all dismounted, the *kaḍee* the first, our master—whose stirrup I had the honour of holding—

¹ Judge : the word is often written *kazee*, or *kazi*, in compliance with Turkish or Levantine pronunciation.

did the same, and embraced, with great demonstration of respectful affection, the venerable judge; who had been, as I afterwards learned, and the Pasha already well knew, a main intriguer against him; but who now prudently acted up to the wise Arab adage, 'Kiss the hand you cannot cut off.'

"The same hand-kissing, and, I dare say, equally sincere, not to mention osculations of hem of robe and foot, was next performed by a long sequence of minor functionaries and chiefs. Followed gun-firing, pistol-firing, rocket-firing, squib-firing, to any amount, till I wondered what could be the price of powder in the Bagdad market; and the horses, already over excited by the crowd and noise, grew almost unmanageable. Some of them bolted; and more than one townsman was tumbled off in the thick dust, to the detriment of his gay silk robes, and the great diversion of the firmer-seated lookers on. In conclusion, what with all these introductory ceremonies, halts, and other delays, instead of reaching the city gates at the lucky hour of noon, as had been intended, we did not pass under them till the crier proclaimed from the minarets the unpropitious hour of 'Aṣr'¹ late in the afternoon; an ill-looking circumstance, and to which our

¹ This time of day is of all others considered the most unfavourable for the commencement of any undertaking; hence

poor master's subsequent tragic fortunes were by many sagaciously ascribed—after date.

“Of Bagdad itself, its noble situation between great river and boundless plain, of its gardens and palm-groves, its gilded mosques, vast market-place, stately mansions, and statelier ruins, I need not tell you, Tāṭāwee ; you must have repeatedly had a full account of them from others. Though no longer the city of Maṇṣoor,¹ Haroon-er-Rasheed, and the Thousand and One Nights, it is not unworthy, even in its present decadence, to be the capital of an empire. As we passed along from street to street, the tall houses overshadowing us above, and the bustling crowd around us, I felt at first rather small, the more so from my being regarded as a mere unit, merged in the general denomination of attendants, or rather slaves.

“This feeling, however, did not long weigh me down ; for when the hurry and confusion of our arrival was over, and we were all settled down in the Pasha's splendid quarters, his own ancestral palace on the east bank of the Tigris, I speedily became—within those walls at any rate—a person of some importance. I was allowedly my master's favourite attendant, taking the lead in pipe

the current Arab proverb, “Better the evil of the morning than the good of the afternoon.”

¹ The Caliph, founder of Bagdad, about the year 760 A.C.

and coffee-serving when guests of distinction had to be received ; besides, I was often sent on confidential messages, such as are only entrusted to bearers whose fidelity and skill alike are reckoned at a high rate.

“This promotion of mine was much facilitated by my aptitude at learning languages. Already, during the varied intercourse of the past months, I had, partly thanks to the lively gossip of the Bagdadees, and even more of the Africans around me, partly to a quick and attentive ear of my own, picked up sufficient Arabic for ordinary conversational purposes, in addition to great improvement in my Turkish. But at Bagdad the Pasha had me put to school, under the charge of a regular *fakēeh*,¹ who instructed me to such good purpose, that within a few more months I was able not only to talk and read Arabic correctly, but even to write a tolerable hand; besides—which last accomplishment my instructor seemed to value most highly of all, though, I confess, I then did not—retaining by heart a round half of the *Koran*. On the whole, my life was far from unhappy, and my condition not a bad one, even in my own eyes ; in the eyes of those around me it was very enviable.

“My friend Michael, now Ghalib, the Croatian, could at last make himself tolerably understood in Turkish ;

¹ A learned man, a teacher, a schoolmaster.

and had, besides, developed into a good rider, a capital shot, and a model of moustachios—remaining all the while the same honest, thick-witted, short-spoken fellow that he was from the first. The negro Sa'eed continued, however, to be, in every place and under every circumstance, my best and steadiest friend; we were close confidants on all subjects but one—the one too near my heart to find its way to my tongue. But Sa'eed, unlike myself and most of my comrades in serfdom, never had the least care to rise to personal independence,—a fine horse to ride, gay clothes, and silver-mounted pistols and daggers in abundance formed the ultimate horizon of his aspirations; having now reached this, he was perfectly content, and never allowed more ambitious dreams to trouble the repose of present satisfaction.

“Not thus the two Greeks, Yoosuf and Dimitri, whose supple servility thinly covered, but did not veil, their restless longing for power, and yet more for money; to this they joined a capacity for intrigue unequalled even by the cunningest native of false 'Irak. Yet, though untrustworthy fellows, they were decidedly clever; and as such they stood high in the good graces of the Pasha, who was of an unsuspicious, and, indeed, of an over-confiding nature.

“The rogues had early noticed our trio,—I mean the negro, the Croatian, and myself, and they made many

indirect efforts to be admitted amongst us, but we distrusted and kept them aloof. I, too, had not forgotten the slight but ill-seeming incidents observed at Constantinople—Yoosuf's conduct in particular. With a Syrian, formerly a Christian of the description called Maronite,¹ I believe they succeeded better. This man had, a couple of years before, fled from Syria on account, it was said, of some crime committed there, and had found his way to Bagdad, where, under the assumed name of Manşoor, he passed for a Mahometan, and being a good writer, had insinuated himself into the Pasha's service. These three formed on their side a close alliance of their own; felt, rather than declared, antagonistic to ours.

"It happened one day, when I had gone by my master's order, as bearer of some immediate message of his to the kaḍee, that the honourable judge, after many demonstrations of more than paternal amiability and special interest in my welfare, inquired in a seemingly casual manner, whether, during our stay at Constantinople, I had become acquainted with the Defterdar, Eyas Beg? A moment's consideration convinced me that a negative answer would be the most prudent one. I

¹ A sect of Syro-Chaldean origin; their head-quarters are in Mount Lebanon, near Beyroot.

gave it accordingly; on which he changed the subject of conversation, and I shortly after left him.

“But the question, and the manner of putting it connected with previous events, startled me; and I determined, without saying anything at the palace, to inquire further into the matter, in my own way and on my own account.

“Now so it was that an Arna’oot¹ of the town guard had married a girl once belonging to the identical kadee’s haram; and in so doing had, in place of obtaining the advantages he expected, been sold a regular bargain. The girl herself proved to be not particularly good-looking; that, however, was a disappointment for which he might without much difficulty have consoled himself; but there was also a far more serious cause of dissatisfaction, namely, that she did not bring with her one half, —no, nor one fourth even, of the money and jewels expected by the bridegroom Agha, on the kadee’s own assurance. Besides, there were valid reasons for suspecting that the deficient dowry was all the while lying stored in some corner of her former master’s strong box. Lastly, the new khanum² assumed high and mighty airs, on the score of her old connections; was exacting and

¹ An Albanian.

² Lady; a title used by Turks, Albanians, and the like.

extravagant, and treated her soldier-husband with as little deference as if he had been her servant, or less.

“Such a condition of things naturally led to ill-humour, ill-humour to quarrels, and quarrels to divorce. Well for the Arna’oot if the affair had ended there. But the lady, sure of support in the quarter where she wanted it, laid before her former patron, the *kaḍee*, a counter-claim against the luckless town-guardsmen for a very considerable sum, the estimated equivalent of imaginary jewellery and ornaments, which she, boldly, without a vestige of proof, accused him of having taken from her by force or fraud, and disposed of to his own advantage. The *kaḍee*, of course, gave sentence in her favour; it was a gross injustice; the ex-husband had to pay, and was furious.

“From this man, thought I, it will be easy to learn everything I want regarding my mealy-mouthed *kaḍee*. Now in a quiet nook of an alley, in the back-slums of the town, was a *kaḥwah*, small in frontage, but spacious within, where not coffee only, but wine, spirits, dice, and other things too, were to be had at will. It was a favourite resort of the divorcing Arna’oot, in company with certain others of his kind and race, whose Islam hung rather lightly on them. Though not myself one of that category, I knew the place well.

“Thither I went one night, and, as I had expected,

found the Agha beguiling his troubles with gambling and drink. I sat down by him. We shared a glass or two of rakee,¹ and a throw or two of the dice. Before an hour had passed, my friend became quite confidential. I then put him on the subject of the *kaḍee*; and he, nothing loth, told me of that functionary all the harm he knew, and a great deal more too, I daresay. The catalogue of vices was a comprehensive one: enough to have hanged ten ordinary criminals, at the least.

“There was much in what he related which I cared little to hear; but I listened to it patiently on account of what else, more to my present purpose, might incidentally be introduced. Of this nature was what I now learnt for the first time regarding the ex-Armenian Eyas Beg; namely, that he was—though this I had already conjectured—a native of Bagdad, or rather of the village of Kelwad,² in its immediate neighbourhood; that in his early days he had been intimately connected—more intimately, indeed, than honourably—with the *kaḍee*; and that he was still, in a manner, the agent of the latter at Constantinople.

¹ The favourite spirituous drink of Christians, and of lax Mahometans, in the East. It is distilled from wine.

² A small town on the Tigris, south of Bagdad. The inhabitants are mainly Christians, and noted for vice and meanness.

"Next he told how, when the late governor of Bagdad had been deposed and imprisoned by order of the Porte, the *kaḍee* intrigued far and wide to obtain the vacant post for a brother-in-law of his own, one 'Alee-Riza Effendee,¹ and had spent much money to that end; but that, having failed, he was using every endeavour to undermine the successful candidate, Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo, our master. Lastly, that the *kaḍee*'s brother-in-law, 'Alee-Riza, had lately quitted Bagdad; ostensibly on a visit to Damascus, but really, it was thought, for Constantinople.

"'Let the Pasha look to himself,' concluded the Arna'oot, 'and see that he holds his own when 'Alee-Riza returns. The Persian faction² of the town, with many of the principal Bagdadees themselves, are discontented, and will side with any one who can hold out to them the smallest prospect of a change in the present order of things. The *kaḍee* will help them underhand; there will be traitors cheaply bought within the palace itself; and as to the Ottomans of Stamboul, what is a Koorde more or less to them? Indeed, I fancy that they would be by no means sorry at Constantinople to

¹ A title given only to civilians; in its current application it denotes no special rank.

² This is a large one in Bagdad.

see Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo tripped up. The Turks are, I hear, jealous of his connections and influence in 'Irak ; besides, it suits them well to make 'Alee-Riza disburse pretty largely for the permission to do what, if he did not, they would themselves sooner or later pay to have done for them.'

"Such was the tenor of the soldier's revelations. I imparted them next day to my two privy-counsellors, black and white, and we agreed to watch the two Greeks and their ally, the Maronite Manşoor, closer than ever, convinced that whatever mischief might be preparing withoutside of our master's residence, they were sure to be acquainted with it, and to be ready to lend a helping hand within.

"They on their side fought shy, and avoided us all they could, though we, perforce, met continually, both on duty and off it ; not only within the precincts of our common residence, the serey',¹ but almost everywhere else, in town and garden ; for the fellows, especially the Greeks, seemed to have quicksilver in their veins, and were always on the move. But 'hearts have eyes,' as the proverb says, and we were mutual and deadly antagonists, though never a word, other than friendly, had passed between us.

¹ Palace : official residence of a pasha or governor.

“Externally everything went on smoothly as yet. The Pasha, though not without his secret enemies, those chiefly of whom I had heard a sample that night in the tavern, was, with the town and province at large, highly popular, and deserved to be so. He was certainly a rough governor, and too much addicted, perhaps, to summary measures, which he termed ready justice, and others called indiscriminating severity; but on the other hand the better qualities which I mentioned before, and which rendered him a good master, rendered him also a more than ordinarily good ruler.

“His popularity was naturally reflected on his men; and while it lasted we had a pleasant time of it. Work was light, and leisure plenty. Indeed, except a short winter expedition towards the desert on the south-west, whither a party of us was sent to repress the plundering Muntefik Bedouins, and the result of which was one man wounded on our side, and three or four on theirs, beside a round thousand of camels driven off, and the country in general rather more impoverished than before; and an occasional hunting-party, when we had to accompany the Pasha on a week’s uncomfortable camping-out among the marshes and ditches of the Tigris lowlands, we remained at ease at Bagdad. There, what between friends, rivals, little intrigues, amusements, days in the gardens, evenings on the river,

nights in the *kaḥwāhs*, or at the *Kara-guz*,¹ and money in plenty to spend, the hours went quickly and cheerily by. Nor did I allow even the remembrance of my own German home to trouble me much ; so thoroughly another was the world I now lived in, so vivid in its varied newness, that the old faded daily away more and more into a confused dream, and its persons into shadows.

“ But it was not so with the one memory I had carried with me from *Diar-Bekr* ; that was to me an abiding, ever-present reality. There they were, the garden, the form, the face, the voice—my *Zahra* ! And often did I lie awake at night, till the first sharp call to prayer spoke the coming dawn, thinking and thinking about her till I thought I should go mad. For the first hopeful excitement, the stirring reaction that followed close on the agony of parting, had now, under the pressure of time and fact, subsided into a weary despondency, to which even the memory of her calm hopefulness, the assurance of her unchanging love, brought little relief ; and turn and twist my probable or possible future as I might, I could make out no tangible chance of our meeting again till it would, reason

¹ A kind of Eastern Punch. It is the ordinary supplement for theatrical exhibitions, of which there are none, strictly speaking, in the Levant ; not always a very decent one.

whispered, be too late for meeting to avail except for despair. Of her truth, her constancy, I never doubted in these moments; I could as soon have doubted the sun at noon-day; but could even she escape the steady onward march of pre-arranged events? or could I have time or power to change their course? Hope I might; but what grounds had I for my hope? It was all mere idle self-deceit. Better to acknowledge the truth at once, however dreary, and give it over. No; for her sake I would not, I could not, succumb.

“So I tossed and turned. Now she seemed near at hand; now far off in interminable distance. Then a wild imagination would come over me that she might—heaven knows how—have without my knowledge arrived at Bagdad, and be now there. And in this mood I would, for days together, turn round almost involuntarily to look after every woman, veiled, half-veiled, or even unveiled that I met in the streets and lanes, as if I really expected to see her; though perfectly sure, so far as reason went, that it could not be she. Till I returned to myself, and said,—though the saying of it profited me little, except to realize my own craving want:—

“Betwixt us lies a sundering space
Of sunlight and of storm;
Yet in each face I seek thy face,
In every form thy form.

"Full well I know thou art not nigh,
I know thou canst not be;
Yet gather proof from every eye,
I may not hope for thee."

"God in His mercy preserve me from falling in love," ejaculated Tanṭawee. Hermann took no notice, but continued :—

"The short winter of 'Irak came and passed; the early spring followed; and I was still servant and slave in the serey'; though my master, who grew fonder of me every day, often talked of giving me my liberty; sometimes of making me his khaznehdar;¹ sometimes also, more often indeed than I at all relished, of providing me with a wife. I, on my side, was now more diligent than ever at my various duties; hoping by such to win more quickly the opportunity and the means requisite for the much-longed-for return to Diar-Bekr. That return was to be, and soon; but how differently from what I had planned! how unlike all I had imagined!

"It was in the month of Rejeb,² when 'Alee-Riza Effendee actually arrived in Bagdad. He came very

¹ Head steward, or treasurer.

² The seventh month in the Mahometan year, and the second before the annual fast of Ramadan. These months, being lunar, coincide with all the seasons of the solar period successively.

quietly, without any pomp of retinue, almost unobserved as it were ; and when, three days later, he paid his first visit of politeness to the Pasha, his bearing was humble and deferential, almost subservient.

“Yet rumours soon got abroad of mysterious messengers, and of nightly meetings at his or the *kaḍee*’s house, in which men of the first importance in the town had a share ; and even I, though, as you may suppose, not admitted into confidence on matters like these, witnessed more comings and goings, more underhand signs and half-whispers between the *Effendee*’s followers and certain of our own palace, than I could explain by any justifiable cause. Sa’eed and some others shared my anxiety, and gave utterance to it. What the Pasha himself thought, or even how much he knew, remained for ever a secret to us. I suppose that his over-confidence in himself, and his haughty contempt for the intrigue and the intriguers alike, made him neglect, over-carelessly as it proved, the information that latterly can hardly have failed to be given him.

“Meanwhile spring advanced, an earlier spring than usual ; the Tigris was swollen, and running down like a torrent close under our garden wall ; some of the trees were in full flower, some, the apricots especially, already bore promise of fruit ; the weather was growing hotter day by day. In compliance with the custom of the

country, we were now all actively preparing to exchange the upper-floor rooms that we had hitherto inhabited, for the underground-cellar existence of a Bagdad summer.

“It was a glorious morning, and I was busy in the arrangement of the principal sirdab¹ for the accommodation of my master, who intended to take up his abode there in a few days. While I placed in order the cushions on the divan, and calculated the vacant space to be left for pipes, writing implements, and the like, I had leisure to relish the coolness, and the subdued greenish-yellow light that filled the cellar; giving the idea, I thought, of a semi-transparent vault under the sea, shone upon by the sun through some twenty feet depth of water. I was enjoying the originality of the place, and the ideas which it suggested, when Sa’eed entered in a stealthy manner.

“‘Are you here, Ahmed Agha?’ said he. ‘I have been looking for you all over the palace this half-hour.’

“‘What is the matter?’ I asked.

“‘Nothing,’ answered the black; ‘but I was uneasy,

¹ A long, low, vaulted room, at some depth below the ground story of the house. All the large dwellings in Bagdad are provided with such, as a retreat from the heat of the outer air in summer.

and wanted your company. Then, too, I have just seen Dimitri, the second Greek—God curse the whole lot of them!—in the sook, talking very familiarly with one of 'Alee-Riza's men. When they noticed me they left off talking, and separated, but when I had got to the other end of the street, I turned round, and saw them at it again.'

" 'There has been a great deal too much of this afoot lately,' I replied. 'Shall we speak about it to the Pasha?'

" 'No,' said Sa'eed, 'better not now; I am afraid he might take it ill on our part. Let us wait a little, and see what comes next. Should there be symptoms of anything dangerous, we will try and give him a hint.'

"Two days later, the negro, mounted on a powerful horse of the Pasha's that he had taken out for exercise was passing under the high wall of a garden immediately outside the town, when he saw 'Alee-Riza Effendee himself, and a troop of attendants, coming along the lane in an opposite direction, also on horseback. After the customary salutations, barely given and returned, Sa'eed drew up against the garden-wall to let them go by. They did so; but hardly had they ridden away a distance of twenty paces, when one of them turned back, with a 'Hallo! my black brother!'

" 'What do you want?' answered Sa'eed.

“‘You have dropped your purse on the way—there it is, at your feet,’ called out the other: and Sa’eed looking down to where he pointed on the ground, saw, in fact, a small knotted purse, almost buried by its own weight in the dust, on which it had evidently been just let fall.

“How it had really come there, and why, there could be no mistake; and Sa’eed was not the man to be purchased at that price. With the crooked end of a long switch that he had plucked a few minutes before from a plum-tree across the wall, he hooked up the heavy little pouch, and taking it in his hand rode quickly up to the speaker—a Damascene; then, tossing it rather at than to him, said,—‘In your teeth, and in your master’s.’¹ The Damascene drew his sword in a rage, and aimed a blow at him, but missed. ‘Alee-Riza himself hastened to interfere and stop the quarrel; and Sa’eed having, negro fashion, uttered many violent things about their fathers, mothers, and so forth, rode away.

“This happened near evening; and on the negro’s arrival at the serey’, in a state of the greatest excitement, he related the whole affair to me. It seemed to us both much too serious for concealment; and we

¹The current Arab phrase here used will not bear literal translation.

determined that either he or I should next morning tell the Pasha. Unhappily, before the morning broke there was no need to tell, and no Pasha to tell it to.

“According to the order established in the household, my customary resting-place for the night was on a carpet spread in the ante-room, whence a door opened into the Pasha’s own private apartment: that, namely, which he occupied when he slept out of the *haram*, as it was his practice to do twice, thrice, or even oftener in the week. The Croatian, Ghalib (whom our master trusted more thoroughly, I think, than he did any one else, even myself), used to lie on the floor within the Pasha’s sleeping-room itself, just across the entrance on the inside, his dagger and pistols arranged under the pillow at his head. There was no other door leading into the room; but the windows on one side opened out upon a gallery running round the interior of the centre-court, and were often only half-closed, particularly during the hot season of the year—a fatal circumstance, as it proved. Sa’eed’s night quarters were with the other negroes and guardsmen—near the great gate of the court-yard, whence a broad flight of low steps led up to the first floor.”

“I thought you had all moved down into the underground vaults,” said Tanṭawee. “You spoke of your having put them in order for the summer.

"They are only for use in the day-time," answered Hermann; "at night, the open air, or at any rate the upper storeys, are the only tolerable resting-places in the climate of Bagdad. However great the heat may have been from sunrise to sunset, the hours of darkness seldom fail to bring on a refreshing change, and the free air is then a thing to be sought, not to be avoided. The upstairs rooms of our serey' were spacious; and though liable to be overheated by the glare of a summer sun, soon cooled down after evening, and became very pleasant; hence my master generally preferred remaining in them from the night prayers¹ till morning. The haram formed a distinct wing of the building, and Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo, who set little store by feminine society, was a comparatively scant visitor there."

"Enough," answered Tantawee. "I understand it all now; so pray continue your story."

Hermann resumed.

"That night (it was dark and cloudy, an unusual thing for the time of year), the Pasha, who had been detained on business till late, and was tired out by the occupations of a more than ordinarily wearisome day, chose to take his rest not in the haram, but in his own apartment. I followed him, and assisted him as usual in undressing

¹ Nearly two hours after sunset.

and preparing for sleep. I then left him for a moment, and returned, bringing the jug of rose-flavoured water which always stood close at his bedside for him to drink from if he felt thirsty during the night.

“‘Ahmed,’ said he, looking up, ‘you are a good youth, and have served me well and faithfully from the day I first took you. I will give you your liberty, please God, at the Lesser Beyram ;¹ and you shall then take duty as my khaznehdar, for I can trust you. What do you say to it?’

“I kissed his hand in answer, and wished him long life.

“Suddenly he started. ‘Did you hear that?’ he exclaimed, sitting right up, and turning very pale.

“‘What?’ said I.

“‘Listen!’

“Dead silence reigned within the room and without ; an occasional gust of wind sighing against the windows was all I heard.

“The Pasha drew a deep breath ; then repeated

¹ The festival immediately following on the yearly Ramadan fast. This must have been then exactly two months distant ; for I find that the Pasha’s death took place on the night of the first of Sha’aban, the month preceding Ramadan, in the year of the story.

to himself, half-aloud, the customary verses of the Koran.¹

“ ‘There was nothing,’ I remarked ; ‘it was only the noise of the wind. God turn it to good !’

“ ‘To good,’ he repeated ; then called Ghalib, and bade him fetch fresh water. When it had been brought, he made his ablutions and said his prayers, at which he remained longer than usual.

“ But hardly had he completed the second salutation at their close, than again he started, looked round, and listened.

“ ‘The summoner !’² he said in a low voice ; ‘the summoner of our family.’ And then to Ghalib and myself, ‘Did you not hear it ?’

“ We both answered in the negative. The wind had now dropped ; all around the house was utterly still. A shiver came over me.

“ ‘I take refuge with God !’ said the Pasha ; and added, ‘Be near to-night, both of you. Ghalib, take care that the doors of the outer room are safely closed ; but first give the men at the lower entrance notice that some of them should remain on the look-out till morn-

¹ These are contained in the last two chapters of the Koran and are recited to avert impending evil.

² The “hatif” or banshee of the Arabs.

ing. You, too, Ahmed Agha, before lying down, go all round the serey', and see that every one is in his place.'

"We promised to do so, and he seemed, after giving these orders, to regain his ordinary quiet of mind; but as I left the room, I heard a deep sigh. I visited the rooms and galleries; there was nothing in them to excite suspicion: silence and darkness reigned everywhere. I then shook off the vague feeling of dread that had been creeping over me, and went to sleep.

"It must have been somewhat after midnight when I was wakened up by a hand, a cool moist hand, laid on my arm. I looked up by the light of a candle left burning in the room; it was Sa'eed who stood over me.

" 'What now?' said I, surprised.

" 'A horrible dream,' answered Sa'eed, who was trembling all over. 'I have just seen *him*. God's curse on him!'

" 'Whom?' I answered, almost inclined to laugh at the excessive alarm in his manner.

" '*Him!*' replied Sa'eed; 'the Evil One. He was exactly as when I first saw him in my own country, the night before they attacked our village: he was standing up to his knees in blood; his face was smeared with it; and there were red horns on his head.'

" 'Donkey of a negro!' said I; 'is that all you have

wakened me about ?' and went on bantering him as best I could about his dream ; but in an undertone, for fear of disturbing the Pasha in the next room.

"But Sa'eed was thoroughly frightened, and continued to repeat, now phrases of anti-diabolical efficacy, I suppose, in his own Darfooree language, now scraps of the *Koran*. I felt very uncomfortable myself, and wished the night over. Sa'eed begged and prayed me to let him remain close by me till morning. 'We had better watch,' he said. I consented, and we sat together talking in a low voice (I, on my part, feigning an easy security which I was in reality far from enjoying), for an hour or so.

"What next startled us both was a deep-drawn, half-snorting, half-gurgling noise from the Pasha's apartment on the other side. We remained silent, and listened. The noise continued a short while, then lessened, then ceased altogether. Dead stillness followed.

"'What can that be ?' said I to Sa'eed, who was now sitting up, his mouth open, his eyes staring and fixed as if moonstruck. While I was yet speaking, the door was gently pushed aside from within a little, then a little more ; the light of the candle placed on a chest in my sleeping-room struck through the opening. I could not see in from where I sat, but Sa'eed could. He sprang up with a horrible yell, and dashed the door wide back,

throwing the person who stood behind it violently to the ground. I followed.

“By the dull glimmer of a lamp on the floor I could indistinctly see Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo Pasha lying in his night-dress on the couch where I had so lately left him, as if asleep; but his head seemed strangely thrown back, and there was a broad streak of something dark and shining from the bed to and along the ground. It was blood, still flowing. The Croatian lay, not on his carpet, but at a little distance on one side of it; his knees were drawn up, and his hands spread out, but motionless.

“The Greeks, Yoosuf and Dimitri, were in the room; so also was Hoseyn, a tall, strong-built Koorde, one of the Pasha’s own suite, and a bosom friend, as every one knew, of Manşoor the Syrian. Yoosuf had been knocked down by the sudden opening of the door; the other two were standing between the divan and the bed on which the Pasha was stretched out. The three murderers had nothing on them except their under linen dress, stoutly girded; but each one had about him a couple of knives—crooked knives and sharp, ready for further use if requisite.

“I too had, by good luck, my yataghan with me. I had stuck it into my belt while sitting up with Sa’eed; he, for his part, was armed with a short two-edged

kama.¹ Drawing this he fell, rather than leapt, upon the still prostrate Yoosuf, and began stabbing him in every direction. The Greek, taken utterly by surprise, made no effort at resistance, but gasped under the blows. The Koorde observing me, rushed at me, a knife in each hand. I caught up the cushion that a few minutes before had pillowed poor Ghalib's head, and with it struck my adversary full on the breast and face; he cast his arms up, and, at the same instant, I ran him through and through with my yataghan.

"Meanwhile a deadly struggle was going on between Sa'eed and Dimitri, now the sole surviving Greek, for Yoosuf already lay stone-dead. Dimitri cut Sa'eed deep in the arm and thigh; while Sa'eed, whose dagger had dropped on the floor, grappled with the enemy, and fixing his sharp white teeth in his throat, flung him about as a stag-hound would a deer he was worrying, receiving all the time fresh but random slashes. Free of the Koorde, I now came up to my companion's help; and seizing the Greek's left arm from behind, struck my knife in home under his ribs; he groaned, and would have fallen to the ground, but the negro's teeth kept him up. Sa'eed had torn open the veins of his throat, and was literally sucking his blood.

¹ A broad-bladed dagger, often worn by Turks.

“‘Let go,’ said I, ‘he is dead.’

“Sa’eed obeyed, grinding his teeth, and drawing in his breath with a sound between a hiss and a moan ; his face was frightful to look on, it was that of a wild beast. The corpse of the Greek dropped on the floor ; he kicked it with his foot.

“‘Come,’ said I, ‘and let us see how it has gone with our master.’

“Sa’eed gave a start, and with a wild scared look accompanied me to the bedside. We trimmed the lamp, the same which the murderers, no doubt, had lighted for completing their evil purpose ; it showed us nothing but death. The Pasha’s throat had been cut right through ; he must have died instantaneously. The Croatian’s neck was bruised, and the spine broken. Of the three assassins two had already breathed their last ; the third, it was the Koorde Hoseyn, still groaned a little. The negro put his foot on the dying man’s breast, and stamped till all was over.

“‘They have not been quite quick enough for us,’ said he. ‘They would have killed us too—you at all events, and reported us robbers, or God knows what. The swine—curse their fathers !—would have had a famous reward from ’Alee-Riza and his friends, and have been themselves made away with also soon after—no—that dog Yoosuf at least would have been too sharp for his

employers. The fellow meant to have been far enough away from Bagdad before dawn;—look here!’ and he pulled out a quantity of gold coin, seals, and jewellery from the blood-stained pockets of the dead Greek’s linen trousers.

“Then suddenly throwing himself all along on the Pasha’s corpse, and kissing the dead hand as though he would have devoured it, ‘O my master!’ he sobbed; ‘O loss! O misery! O God—misery!’

“I could bear up no longer; the excitement of the struggle, and all the savage feelings that had accompanied it, revenge, hatred, self-defence, fury, were now passing away fast as the passing moments. I gazed on the death-pale face of Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo—he had been throughout a kind and liberal master and patron to me; at the distorted and swollen features of Ghalib the Croatian—he had been my earliest companion in my captivity, and a steady affectionate friend; and sitting down by the dead body of my poor comrade on the floor, I burst into an agony of grief.

“Sa’eed looked up. ‘What are you after, crying there?’ he said. ‘Up; take some of this along with you,’ tossing me a handful of the plunder of the helpless Greek; ‘up, and be off, and far away hence before daylight, or you are a lost man. You will be made answerable for all this; and impalement is the very least that

the *kaḍee* and 'Alee-Riza between them, will adjudge you.'

"What he said was the truth; there was no doubting that it would be even so. 'But you, Sa'eed,' I answered, 'are you not coming too? Up, and along; we shall live to take more revenge for our master yet.'

"'I have done, and am done for,' was his reply, as he pointed to his side, from which the blood was running fast and thick; another stream, bright red on the black skin, trickled by jets down his arm from the shoulder to the elbow.

"'I cannot leave you thus, my brother,' said I. 'Let me tie it up; we can then go on together, and I will take care of you by the way till we reach some quiet hiding-place not far off. Come along.'

"'No, Ahmed Agha,' he answered; 'the time for all that is gone by. If I were to try and accompany you, it would not save me—it would only put you in danger of being caught. Go, my brother; go in God's guard, and leave me alone. I will join my master.'

"Thus saying, he settled himself down, all bleeding as he was, at the foot of the bed, and leant his head against the knees of the corpse on it. I tried to rouse him—he was panting quick and hard. As I touched him he shrank away impatiently, and buried his face in the bed-covering. Soon his breathing slackened and

stopped. Gently I took his hand : it was icy cold, the fingers closed firm on mine ; he looked up at me, a look of strange tenderness, pitifully earnest, and smiled. An instant after, his eyeballs rolled inwards and upwards,—his hand stiffened in my hold—he was dead.”

Hermann was silent a minute.

I have often heard,” said Tanṭawee, “that negroes have a secret for dying at will ; curious fellows, those blacks. May God have mercy on him !”

Hermann repeated the phrase with much feeling, but added nothing ; he seemed far away in thought.

“How lonely you must have felt, poor boy !” continued Tanṭawee, wishing to rouse him from his reverie. “I can fancy your dreariness when all was over, and you were left alone, with only the dead around you. Did you ever hear what happened next day, and what became of the corpses ?”

Hermann roused himself.

“When next I visited Bagdad, almost three years later, I found that the Pasha—God have mercy on him !—had received honourable and costly sepulture amid the tombs of his family close by the Mosque of the Şaliḥeeyah, in the Koordish quarter of the city ; an open cupola had been erected over his grave, which was popularly revered as that of a martyr : for no one of the townspeople doubted that infidels—that is, the two

Greeks—had done the deed. Their corpses had been gibbeted for a few days, then taken down and thrown into the river. Hoseyn, who came in for the benefit of the doubt whether he had not, perhaps, met his fate in defending his master, and Sa'eed, had been buried, but apart from each other; the former in the Koordish cemetery, the latter in the great general burying-ground outside the city walls, on the south side.

“No stone marked the spot where my poor negro friend was laid; but it was pointed out to me by some townsmen, who, in accordance with the common belief, called Sa'eed, like his master, ‘martyr,’ and spoke of the murder with the fresh horror of a recent occurrence. When alone afterwards, I often went there,—you may wonder,—but I had reasons for doing so which I cannot tell even to you. Take in exchange the verses of my lament; I recited them over the grave.

“When the waning moon is high,
And the dawn is on her track,
And the cypress shadows black
On the turbaned tombstones lie;
And the sudden call is loud
That the faithful bids to prayer,
Thou shalt stir thee in thy shroud,
Wakeful mid the slumbers there.

"Thou wast faithful in thy life;
Thou wast faithful in thy end;
Faithful follower, faithful friend,
Faithful found in rest and strife.
Ever ready to my call,
Ever present at my side;
Now thou com'st not,—silent all;
Is the severing gulf so wide?

"God of faithful hearts and brave,
God of loving hearts and true,
Fresher than the morning dew
Be Thy mercies on that grave.
Be Thy mercies on the head
That was bowed to none but Thee;
Be Thy mercies on the dead,
Yet not wholly dead to me."

"Why, our celebrated poetess, Tomadir the Khansa,¹ herself, could hardly have lamented *Sakhr* more feelingly; you deserve a place among the bards of the 'Hamaşah,'"² said Tanṭawee. "Not that I quite follow the meaning of your last line."

¹ A pre-Islamite authoress of note; her verses of mourning over her brother *Sakhr*, who died of wounds received in battle, have come down to us, and are ranked among the best elegies of Arab literature.

² The classical "Golden Treasury" of Arab poetry; it was compiled by Abou-Temman, himself a poet of the first order, about 820 A.C.

This was spoken inquiringly; but Hermann's face gave no promise of explanation, or even of answer. Tanṭawee saw it, and changed the subject.

"And what," added he, "was the current idea in Bagdad regarding the assassination itself? To whose instigation was it ascribed? I know thus much only, that neither 'Alee-Riza Effendee nor any of his faction profited by it."

"They certainly did not," replied Hermann. "The investigation, I was told, was secret; but measures accompanied it, or followed, which proved that the mystery did not remain uncleared in the councils of Constantinople at least. Such were the sudden and total disappearance of 'Alee-Riza; the disgrace and downfall of the too-powerful ḳādee; and the appointment of the stern and despotic Ṭahir Kubrooslee Pasha, formerly an intimate friend of Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo, to the government of the province.

"In Bagdad itself," he continued, "no one ventured to speak openly, even then; but public opinion, though whispered only, hit the mark, or very near it. I indeed thought it prudent, during my short stay, to avoid personal recognition—no difficult business, so changed was I in look and bearing from the comely light-hearted lad of scarce three years before; but if I had instead openly announced myself for who I was in the midmarket-

place, there would have been, I believe, no real risk in so doing."

"It is wonderful," remarked Tanṭawee, musingly, and speaking rather to himself than to his friend, "how those dogs of Osmanlees contrive to become acquainted, —usually a little after time, it is true,—with whatever occurs throughout the vast straggling empire; and how, sitting still themselves, and seeming to take no notice, they get into their fat hands the strings of every intrigue, from the Danube to the Tigris, and pull them to their own advantage. God knows best, but I almost fear they may in the end prove too much even for us. But now," he said, addressing himself directly to Hermann, "pray resume your story, and tell me how you got off safe." The other continued,—

"After a few paralysed minutes of intense depression and horror, I awoke to my own immediate and personal danger. What Sa'eed, poor fellow, had said, I knew to be strictly correct; if I was found within Bagdad next morning, there was nothing for me but torture and death. I must make haste.

"Turning my attention first to the corpses of the Pasha, the negro, and the Croatian, I arranged and covered them as decently as I could, but without altering their respective positions; thus, I thought, they would best tell their own story. Next I took one of the

Koorde Hoseyn's knives—they were sharper than my dagger—and with it severed the heads of the three murderers, putting each head between its owner's feet, where they lay in blood on the floor—the curse of God on them all! This done, I crammed some loose coin into my pockets, threw the jewellery on the Greek Yoosuf's treacherous face, and made for the door; whence, however, I turned again to kiss the hands of my late master, and of my faithful friend Sa'eed, once more, and to put out the light.

“From the chamber of death, through the ante-room, along the passage, down the dark steps, I felt my way, till the cool night air blew on me from the open, and I stood in the courtyard. Everywhere around in the serey' was silence; the mortal struggle, too fierce in its short duration for shout or cry, had given no alarm. Sa'eed's unrepeatd yell of horror, if heard, had passed unnoticed.

“My first thought now was to try and get one of the Pasha's horses out of the stable, but the grooms were sleeping there; and the fear lest the animal should neigh and wake them up prevented me; besides, how could I contrive to open the large folding doors of the palace and pass the guards there, unnoticed? So I abandoned that scheme, and began looking about for a place in the walls where I could conveniently climb over. This I was

lucky enough soon to find ; in a couple of minutes more I had dropped noiselessly into a narrow lane behind the building.

“Without once turning to bid farewell to the home thus left, I passed down the alley, carefully looking around, but seeing no one except the silent stars above me, till I came full on the river. The deep stream was flowing calmly and rapidly by in all its mighty life—the great life in which we all share, and which takes no heed of our coming or of our going ; a few dim lights glimmered on the far-off opposite shore ; some black boats lay moored in darkness close under the bank, but there was no one in them keeping watch ; the very town-dogs were fast asleep curled up in the dust ; it was the stillest hour of the night—that which immediately precedes the dawn. Quietly as might be, I went on till I reached the point where the city walls and towers come sheer down upon the water. In I plunged, swam with the current round the corner, and a good hundred yards lower down the stream ; until, taking advantage of a grassy slope at the edge, I managed to scramble out, and found myself in a field somewhat to the south of the town, on the east side of the Tigris.

“To what particular point of the compass I should next turn was a consideration for which I had no leisure as yet ; all I thought of was how to get away, and that

the quickest and the farthest possible, in any direction. Looking round by the grey light of early morning, now spreading over river and plain, I distinguished a dark heap—it was the night-encampment of some travellers, I know not who, sleeping on the ground not far off; probably they had arrived the evening before, too late for admittance within the gates. Most of their horses were picketed close by them, but two stood at a tempting distance from their owners, behind the baggage.

“One of these I resolved to appropriate for my own use. So I crept cautiously up; the men were sound asleep, and their heads hid beneath the cloaks which covered them all over from the night air. Gently—for my life was at stake—I drew away a saddle and bridle from the heap of travelling-gear to which these articles belonged, and carried them to the farthermost horse—a light bay. I stroked the beast, breathed up his nostrils, put some grass to his mouth to keep him occupied; next placed the saddle on his back, and fastened the girths; slipped the bridle over his head, and the bit into his mouth; then cautiously undoing the foot-ropes, led him a little way on one side, preparatory to mounting him, when, to my intense disgust, the brute gave a long whinnying neigh. It was answered by a whole chorus of the other quadrupeds where they stood by their owners, as if on purpose to arouse the slum-

berers, and 'stop thief.' But the alarm-signal had been deferred till too late; that very instant I had leapt into the saddle, and was off into the uncertain twilight, just in time to elude the pursuit which my now awakened friends hurriedly prepared to make after me. 'A lucky hit,' thought I, as off I galloped, 'somebody will have to get a new horse to-day, but it shall not be from me.'

"Away I went, by plain and palm-grove, taking no heed whither my course led, except to keep well clear of the town-walls, and of the many villages in their neighbourhood. As the bright sun flashed upon the horizon I drew bridle for a moment, and looked round; far off glittered the gilt domes of the Kāzim mosque;¹ and smaller yet, because in remoter distance, the cupola of the Gheelanee,² several miles to the south-west. I had, without intending it, taken the direction of Kerkhook.

"What, meantime, became of my pursuers, and of the rightful owner of the horse I bestrode, I never ascertained; probably they missed my track from the very first. Anyhow, there was no one in sight but a stray peasant here and there, come out to his morning work,

¹ A celebrated sanctuary of the Shēe'ah, or Persianizing sect, at Bagdad. It is built over the tomb of one of their twelve Imams.

² A mosque, bearing the name of the famous 'Abd-el-Kādir el Gheelanee, a well-known saint of Mahometan hagiology.

and the trooping birds that flew over or settled on the parched fields. I was acquainted with this part of the country, having traversed it more than once on my late master's errands to the neighbourhood; and I had then remarked a large and deep-cut canal, which I now guessed to be not far off. This I sought; and, having discovered it, I next rode along it, hoping to find a convenient spot where I could conceal myself close to its banks. At last, I came on a large shell-like hollow, into which I led my horse, tethered him, and then took a thorough survey of my person and dress. The first view reassured me somewhat: I was much less besmeared with blood than I had imagined in the dark.

"Taking off my clothes I walked knee-deep into the water, washed myself all over, and then scrubbed hard at the streaks and stains on my apparel and accoutrements. The marks would not come out altogether—if ever you try, you will find how hard blood is to get rid of—but, at all events, they took a different and less damning appearance; especially when, after a thorough soaking and rinsing, I rubbed a considerable quantity of the brown canal-dust into every part of my dress. Then I sat down again by the side of my horse, and drew out my gold pieces with a heavy sigh, remembering how they had come into my possession; I counted them—they were eighty-seven in all. These

things over, I tried forcibly to drive away the black swarm of thoughts which, like the mosquitoes of the canal, were ever ready to settle on me the first instant of leisure, and applied my whole mind to consider what I had best do next, and whither go.

"North?—that it must be. It was, though at an immense distance, the way to my own home; and it was also—which I allow was a much more urgent motive to my mind, now quite unhinged from that old home by the many events and violent changes that had occurred since I left it—the way to Diar-Bekr, to the home of Zahra'! At that name life returned, and for half a second I felt as though I could be almost glad at the result of a night which had put me so suddenly on the way back to her, just when I was beginning to lose all hope of a second meeting. But reflection made me immediately ashamed of so egotistical a feeling, and I denied it to myself; wishing on the contrary, expressly and deliberately, that I had been, not on the road Diar-Bekrwards, safe and sound, but lying dead in the inner chamber of the serey', alongside of my good negro friend and my noble trusting master.

"Having reiterated this wish two or three times to make sure of it—"

"You were very glad all the same," interposed Tantawee, "that it was not so; and had there been the

slightest possibility of such an exchange, you would hardly have wished it so freely."

"No, not so," rejoined Hermann; "I was quite sincere; I wished it with all my heart then and there—I know I did." He continued,—

"Rising, I led my horse up the bank again out of the hollow, crossed a small bridge, and put the canal between myself and Bagdad, now lost from view.

"Diar-Bekr was, then, to be my goal; but by what route? Three things were evident; first, that I must lose no time in getting clear of the risk of being caught and led back; secondly, that I must shape my way so as to include the necessary opportunities for obtaining food and shelter; thirdly, that I could not venture to show either myself, my clothes, or my horse, in any village too near Bagdad. The alarm might have already spread to a distance, or, if not, it was sure soon to do so; and my appearance and recognition might lead either to immediate arrest, or lend a clue to subsequent inquiry and following up. On the other hand, though a stranger-born, I was by this sufficiently acquainted with the narrow range of localization in the East to know that if once at a reasonable distance from the scene of action, I was comparatively secure from being involved in its consequences; and that if once clear of the limits of the Pashalik itself, I had little or nothing to fear.

"The result was, that, instead of retracing the direct road to Kerkhook, that by which I had come the year before, I struck out more to the east, and made my way for three weeks of incessant riding and roughing it through a broken and thinly-peopled country. Most often I journeyed by night, for the heat of the sun was intense, and I ill able to bear it, wearied out as I was by excitement and privations; I passed my days where and how I could. Many were the vicissitudes of hospitality and of churlishness that I experienced among the villagers, peasants, and shepherds; frequently hungry, sometimes in danger; for the population hereabouts is scant and lawless; every man carries arms, and uses them as he thinks fit. At last I arrived on the banks of the Zab, at the so-called Kanjar ford, considerably above the spot where I had so gaily dashed across the torrent before Pasha and comrades a twelvemonth since.

"After many attempts and failures, I traversed the furious rush of waters, and set my face for Moşool, three days' distance, as some shepherds, who were driving their flocks to drink at a reach on the northern bank, informed me. Far away from Bagdad, beyond the utmost limit of its jurisdiction, I now felt tolerably safe; and while slowly measuring out the three days of road that the weariness alike of horse and rider protracted

to four, I had ample leisure to reflect on the utter loneliness of my actual condition in the world.

“Lonely indeed. True, I was no longer a prisoner or a slave; but so long as I had been one or the other, I had, at all events, some one to hold by, some one who had an interest in me; now there was no one. I was my own master, but in a strange land; among men and languages still in a measure strange; no friend, no adviser, no companion, no stay—strangers all. Zahra’ herself, her lovely face, her gentle voice, her sweet converse, with whatever had occurred at Diar-Bekr, the garden, the terrace, the house, the place of meeting, the whole episode seemed to me to fade somehow into a dream, and that all the more as I approached my one haven of hope. I could not get myself to think steadily that it had been, and might still be, a reality.

“In vain I strove to recall it. That place, the place of reality, was now occupied in my mind by Bagdad—by its streets, its market, its gardens, by the palace, by my kind master the Pasha, by my cheery friend the negro, by my staunch ally the Croatian; again and again the horrible death-scene came before me, or, rather, it was never absent. I saw the faces I had known and loved, now ghastly and disfigured as when the lamp gleamed on them in that fatal room; now, but as if through a haze or mask, bearing their wonted appear-

ance; at times I could not persuade myself but that one or other of them was actually near me, so real they seemed.

"The country around me, too,—do you know it?—no; you were never there yourself,—increased the sense of desolation; dull slabby rocks, bare slopes, dry chalk hill-sides, and, over all, monotonous cloudless sky, in which the very sun appeared to stand still for heaviness; now and then some broken wall of an old abandoned fortress, telling no history in its unmeaning fragments, except that of decay and ruin—"

"For God's sake, my good fellow, get out of this," answered Tanṭawee, "my hair is growing grey to hear you; your account is more dreary than the croak of the unluckiest raven."

"What must the thing itself have been to me, who went through it all?" said Hermann; then continued,—

"But youth and health were mine yet, and they do wonders. I felt, even in my most melancholy moments, an elasticity, as it were, that nothing could crush, and a determination to go through or tread down whatever difficulties might cross my way.

"Thus I rode on; till after coming out from among the huge earth-heaps—what heaps are they?—one would say that some vast city must lie buried underneath them—on the eastern bank of the Tigris, I saw

the river itself, the rock of Nebes Yoonas,¹ and the town of Moşool before me, though still at a considerable distance.

"The sight dissipated my day-dreams, bright and gloomy alike, and aroused me to the realities and cares of actual life. Dismounting from my horse, I bestowed a general survey on my person and weapons, furbished up with earth the silver mountings of the latter, re-arranged the saddle and other accoutrements, and counted over again my diminished stock of wealth. Then, taking advantage of a clear brook that was hastening close by over the pebbles to join the great river of the plain, I performed my long-neglected ablutions, and said my prayers, with late and almost penitent gratitude to the God who had brought me safe and sound thus far through so many dangers, and with increased hope and trust in Him for the future. This duty performed, I remounted, and began to traverse at a foot-pace the wide stony level that marks the old water-bed, and out of which rises the strange isolated rock of Nebes Yoonas, like a giant watch-tower over river and town.

¹ A large isolated rock on the left shore of the Tigris, opposite Moşool; the prophet Jonas is supposed to have taken up his station here when announcing the destruction of Nineveh.

"It was the Friday of the last week in Sha'aban,¹ a festive season, and, besides, a day of commemoration in honour of I know not what Welee,² in the suburbs of the town. On my way alongside of the huge rock, and down the gradual slope to the river, I fell in with group after group of citizens, gaily dressed in their best clothes; some were on horseback, some on foot, and all equally bent on enjoying to the utmost a daylight holiday, before the approaching month of Ramadan should limit the pleasures of existence to the short summer nights.³

"Noon had passed, but the sun was yet high in the bright west; and the river with its broad marginal tract of stones and gravel glittered before me in dazzling light; the very mud walls of Moşool looked golden in the gleam. For myself, I was growing hungry, having tasted no food since a platter of sour clotted milk, shared with a shepherd that morning among the now

¹ The month which immediately precedes the fast of Ramadan; hence it assumes something of a carnival character, particularly towards the end. Friday, among the Mahometans, takes the place of Sunday among Christians.

² Saint.

³ During that month, all eating, drinking, smoking, and every kind of pleasure and amusement is prohibited from the first streak of dawn till after sunset.

far-off hills. Instinctively I looked hard at every one I met, in the vague idea of recognising a friend or acquaintance; while I also thought in what khan of the town I had best put up, should nobody claim me as a subject for the hospitality of which my horse, poor jaded brute, so unceremoniously pressed into hard service, stood scarcely less in need than myself.

“Just as I reached the water, and halted hesitating on its edge, a large flat-bottomed boat crossed over from the town-side to the place where I had drawn rein, and half a dozen Koordes, well dressed, and armed in full travelling equipment, stepped out on the stones. I looked at them; they looked at me.

“‘Ahmed Agha! is it you?’ said one of them; while another exclaimed, ‘by God! it is he.’ All eyes were now on me; and after a short effort of memory, I recognised in the first speaker, one Maḳan Agha, a horseman in the service of Aḳ-Arslan Beg, governor of the town of Jezeerah, half-way between Moṣool and Diar-Bekr. Our acquaintance dated from a day’s halt that my old master the Pasha had made in that place when on his ill-starred journey to Bagdad; and had been a very hearty one on both sides, though based only on a casual meeting in a pleasant little ḳahwah near the river, and cemented with nothing firmer than the smoke

of a nargheelah, a cup or two of indifferent coffee, and a glass of yet more indifferent rakee.

“But Maḵan Agha was a sociable fellow, bright and cheerful, with a keen black eye, quick to observe, coarse but handsome features, and a friendly expression of face which corresponded with his good-hearted disposition. Thus, though a year had elapsed since our first and only meeting, he knew me again at once, and hastened to welcome me. I need hardly say how glad I was to feel the hand of a friend in mine once more. His five comrades, who all belonged to the same service as himself, were unremembered by me, that is, distinctly, though I was not so by them; a circumstance ordinary with strangers in all countries.

“‘And what brings you here alone?’ continued Maḵan Agha, with a queer side-glance at my dress, and another at my drooping horse, after the preliminary stereotyped greetings, salutations, and inquiries had been duly interchanged between us.

“‘The chances of the times,’ answered I, unwilling to enter there and then into what, I thought, might yet be the dangerous details of adventure and escape. ‘And you, where are you bound for?’ I added.

“‘For Jezeerah,’ he replied; ‘one and all of us. The Beg wishes to be there before the beginning of

Ramadan; we shall get to Zakoo¹ to morrow, and the day after be, please God, at home.'

"'And where is the Beg.'

"'Coming, as soon as he has done taking leave of his friends. Look! there he is.'

"I turned in the direction indicated, and saw, on the further side of the river, a group of caparisoned horses in the act of being led down by grooms to the bank. Near them, but on foot, were several persons, seemingly of rank and wealth, slowly moving onward in close conversation, to the water, where a boat was in waiting. When they had reached it, they remained a short time standing gathered together; then followed a great deal of embracing and other demonstrations of respectful and affectionate leave-taking. At last the Beg, for it was he, stepped, with a few attendants, into the boat, and seated himself gravely on the carpet spread for him at the stern; the horses were meanwhile being part coaxed, part forced, into a clumsy barge some yards distant.

"With no formed purport in my mind, but merely as a looker-on, I loitered among my newly-found acquaintance, till the Beg and his servants arrived at our side of the water, and prepared to quit the

¹ A large village, more than half way from Moşool to Jezeerah.

boat. I then drew off on one side, and waited till the barge, which was now also near, should have discharged its restless freight, and be ready to convey my horse and myself over to the town.

“But Mağan Agha stepped up to the Beg, his chief, and whispered something to him. Having received an answer in the same undertone, he next approached me, and said, ‘Ahmed, brother, he calls you.’

“On the summons I came forward, leading my drooping horse by the bridle, and saluted Ak-Arslan with the respect due to his birth and importance. My famished way-worn appearance, ungroomed horse, and scanty belongings, must have presented a curious contrast to the well-dressed, well-fed, well-mounted figures that crowded inquisitively about me.

“The Beg fixed his look attentively on me, while he returned my salutation with marked but patronizing kindness of manner. He was a small, clean-built man, dark haired, and dark complexioned, bearing a general resemblance to a handsome hawk; his age could not have much exceeded thirty; and his features would have been good-looking, had not frequent exposure to sun and wind, with hard work, mental no less than bodily, drawn and wrinkled them into a certain harshness of line. His eye too was restless, and its glance furtive. He was evidently what is called a dangerous

man; yet one whom his followers might, on the whole, like, and still more, perhaps, obey. Such was my impression of him at first sight.

“‘No need, Agha, to tell your story,’ said he. ‘I had heard before that you were missing on the morning after that night from the palace; and I guessed that you had managed to get safe off—how, we will hear from you afterwards at leisure. May God have mercy on Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo! I anticipated long since that some snare or other was being set for him, and gave him a hint or two on the subject when he came through Jezeerah last year. I had then my especial doubts about the Greeks in his company; one of them was, I know, a pick-up of that hypocrite Eyas-Beg—may God curse him and them! But, to what purpose?—when what has been predestined approaches, the eyesight becomes blind; no man can escape from that which has been written. And you?’ he continued, in a brisker tone of voice,—‘where are you going next? or have you any friends whom you are looking after here?’

“‘None,’ I answered; ‘God grant the Beg a long life! I am travelling where God may direct; perhaps a way may open somewhere.’ And with difficulty I smothered a sigh as I thought of Zahra’. But I could not help the downcast expression of my face, and the Beg remarked it.

“‘Assuredly after difficulty comes relief,’¹ said he. ‘Better come along with me; God is generous. I will see to all you want when we reach Jezeerah.’

“These words were spoken with genuine kindness, yet with a certain air of authority too, as by one accustomed to be obeyed. Hesitation on my part would have been mere folly. I thankfully embraced the invitation, leaving its conditions to be settled afterwards. Besides, would it not anyhow bring me nearer to Diar Bekr?

“By the Beg’s order I was on the spot provided with a fresher horse, and took my place among the riders in his suite. The animal that had served me so well I handed over to Maḵan Agha, who sold it at the first village we reached—at what price I never asked.

“We went briskly forward—a compact band—by the hilly, grass-grown tract that borders the left bank of the Tigris. That night we halted at a small village—Tell-Keyf, I think, by name; the second afternoon brought us to Zakoo, a pretty little town and market-place, close by the rapid Khaboor;² the river-ford delayed us somewhat, and we did not reach Jezeerah till the third night-fall.

¹ A quotation from the Koran.

² A river that joins the Tigris hereabouts from the east.

“During the march the Beg often called me up to his side, and asked me many questions concerning my life at Bagdad, and my escape thence; more often his inquiries regarded my former master, his government, his conduct, the intrigues formed against him, and the circumstances of his violent death. My answers must have pleased him; for, when I had finished, he said,—

“‘Ahmed, I might fairly claim you as a slave, for such, indeed, you yet are by condition, but I will not do so. You are a fine youth, and I do not doubt that Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo—may God have mercy on him!—really intended to have given you your freedom. It is only just that I should comply with his wishes—may it be put to the account of his good deeds, not of mine. When we arrive, please God, at Jezeerah, I will have your certificate-paper of emancipation made out in full, and you shall become one of my horsemen. Are you content?’ I kissed his hand, and thanked him. ‘Thank God, not me,’ he replied.

“Good fortune, like bad, has a habit of coming double or triple. On the very day—it was the second after leaving Moşool—that Ak-Arslan gave me a near and assured hope of becoming a free man, I made an acquisition, pleasant indeed at the time, but the full value of which I was only to know later on.

“It was the friendship of a youth, a mere lad in age,

an Arab of the Benoo-Riah clan, whom I met in the principal *kaḥwah* of the village of Zakoo, where we had halted for the night. The lad, Moḥarib by name, had left his companions in the pasture-grounds below Moṣool, and had come thus far in quest of some sheep, strayed a month before, and not yet accounted for. With a daring and intelligence beyond his years, though not rarely found among young Bedouins, he had penetrated alone and unaided to Zakoo ; had there discovered part of the objects of his search ; and was, when we fell in with him, engaged in hot dispute with two huge Koordes, whom he accused of keeping back the remainder.

“The lad’s handsome features, the active energy displayed in every lithe limb of his spare frame, but above all, his self-possessed, undaunted air, and coal-black eye that sparkled with fire, attracted my notice ; and my double knowledge of Turkish and of Arabic enabled me to take his part with such good effect, that a satisfactory equivalent for the missing animals was at length offered and accepted.

“This incident led, as was natural, to further conversation between us ; he told me his own name, descent, and the circumstances of his clan. I, on my side, recounted my story and adventures, without, however, as I thought, giving, by what I said, any clue

to the secret of my soul at Diar-Bekr, a secret thus far kept by me from all others ; yet the pleasure I experienced in talking Arabic for the first time since I had left Bagdad, and the very copiousness of that language where feeling is concerned, betrayed me, as I subsequently reflected into certain words and phrases that might, to one who was on the look-out for it, afford a general insight into my real state of mind. However, I did not then think that I had done so, and Moharib, after listening with great attention, and even asking a few questions, the purport of which I could not entirely follow, made no direct allusion to my unguarded expressions. Only, when all had been said, he manifested for me a degree of interest and attachment, scarcely to my mind justified by the easy service that I had rendered him an hour before. He would devote himself, body and soul, to the furtherance of my wishes ; he would stand by me in every danger ; he would be my follower, my companion, my brother ; in fine, he gave me no rest till I had consented to go through with him that very evening the ceremony of 'Khoo'wat,'¹ according to the custom of his tribe.

¹ "Brotherhood:" the ceremony itself is described further on. It is not rarely practised among the Bedouins of the interior, and is sometimes called Mushatibah. Its performance

“More from curiosity than from any other motive I consented. So, after sunset, Moḥarib and I left the village, and retired together into a little grassy dell not far distant, shut in by hill and rock. There we recited the *Fatīḥah*;¹ and, after solemn pledges of mutual and inviolable faith, each of us opened a vein of his left arm, somewhat above the elbow, letting the blood run down and mingle in a brass cup which, under one pretext or other, I had borrowed for the occasion from the keeper of the *ḵaḥwah*. Out of this cup we drank, each a full draught, becoming thus, according to Bedouin usage, ‘brothers’ for life and death. The stars went out, pale in the dark sky, as we re-entered the village.

“For that night and next morning, till with the rest I crossed the *Khaboor* ford, my new-found Bedouin friend never left me. He accompanied me through the water; on the further side we embraced and separated; but when, after we had made a considerable distance on the road, I turned and looked back, I saw his

imposes the strictest obligations of mutual fidelity and assistance during life; and should one of the “brothers” happen to be killed, the other is bound to avenge his death.

¹ The opening chapter of the *Koran*; it is the invariable preface to all contracts, engagements and the like, among Mahometans.

slender form still standing where I had left him, watching to the last moment his newly-adopted brother.

"My courage rose at the sight: I was no longer alone and single-handed. True, it was not till a later period that I knew how steadfast an ally I had gained in this young Arab; but even then it seemed to me that more had been restored to me in Moḥarib than I had lost in Sa'eed; and in Ak-Arslan a better master—though this was not, as it proved, truly the case—than in the ill-fated Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo. Might not—would not, Zahra' also be restored, given me? I was full of hope; my boat had got into the flowing current once more; my winter blossomed into spring. I thanked Providence and worshipped in my heart."

"A likely, spirited young fellow," here interposed Tanṭawee, as Hermann paused awhile in his narrative, "is often, when all is said, the best Providence for himself, if he will only keep his eyes well open and his heart well up. Success in life follows, like everything else, the great laws of Nature; under certain conditions it must necessarily result, just as failure is inevitable under others. How the conditions themselves are determined is, I admit, another question."

"And what, pray," asked Hermann, "is your own opinion on that point?"

"The proper thing to say," rejoined Tantawee, "would be, of course, that God determines them. My own answer, if you must have it, would be rather differently worded, though, after all, its meaning is, in reality, pretty much the same as that of the other. I hold then, that these conditions, whether of person or of circumstance, of will, passion, choice, country, associates, and the rest, are nothing else than the pre-defined and necessary results of that which has gone before; and that they and all besides them enter into and centre in the eternal self-developing existence of the universe. It is all one, spirit be it or matter: spirit is the cause, the life; matter, the form, the manifestation; each under unnumbered modifications, and the whole uniting in the measureless general life and existence which always have been, and will always be.

"There now," he continued, "you have, in a few words, the opinion of our own 'Omar Ebn-el-Farid,¹ and of all others worth naming for thought in all lands, East or West; when, that is, they know how to express themselves.

¹ A mystic poet of great beauty, native of Cairo, in Egypt. His works are to this day the text-book of Mahometan metaphysicians. He flourished about 1060 A.C.

"Not an aimless world," he went on, with more animation than usual in his manner, as Hermann remained listening and silent; "not a centreless circle, an eyeless socket, a hopeless 'it is, and so must be,' without above or beneath, behind or before, without purpose, direction, or goal; no, nor a no less aimless Deity, creating or destroying, protecting or ruining, feeding or letting starve, life-giving or slaying, by the mere caprice of 'I can, and I choose to do so,'—a way of acting disgraceful in a man, let alone in a God such as they suppose Him; nor an autocrat God, occupied with Himself only, ordering all for His own glory, His own good pleasure, His own selfish will. No, none of these; but an intelligent and all-pervading Life, Thought, Act, under countless modes and forms, working on everywhere to higher existence and enjoyment; and perfecting, while it pervades them, the manifestations it assumes, and the matter which it vivifies; not as things separate or distinct from itself, but ultimately One, One only with it in the great All of Being."

"You have said it," replied Hermann, "and well, I dare say; though I cannot quite follow out your meaning. But what, meanwhile, becomes of the prophets, their books, their systems, and their creeds, with all their set prayers, their fasts, festivals,

and religions of dogma and ceremony? What place do you leave for them?"

"Symbols, formulas—nothing more," answered Tan-tawee. "Mere approximations—some completer, some more defective—to the one and only truth that all aim at and none attain, except it be by a rare occasional point of contact, nor always even that. How, indeed, can a measured circle coincide with the 'infinite?' Still, they may pass muster as formulas, if held for such alone, not for the things they are meant to denote; and in this view they are well and good enough for those who like them. But a sensible man, while putting up with one of them—that, for instance, which best suits his nationality, education, employment, turn of mind, and so forth—will really and inwardly bind himself to none."

He paused. For reply Hermann recited the well-known distich of Aboo-l-'Ola'.¹

"Muslims and Christians are equally blind,
The Jews and the Pagans in error no doubt.
All over the world but two classes we find,—
Fools with religion, and wise men without."

¹ A poet, native of Ma'arrah in the north of Syria; he flourished about the year 1000 A.C. His works are still extant and popular in the East.

He repeated these verses with something of a sarcastic bitterness in his voice, that showed him far from approving of them. Tanṭawee readily caught his meaning.

"Why, boy," said he, "if Aboo-l-'Ola' meant—as I do not doubt he did, for he was no shallow thinker—by religion set forms and dogmas, he was right enough, and I, for one, am of his school. Can you not see that forms while they include exclude also, and that dogmas narrow while they define? Or do you not perceive that the only absolutely true religion—were such possible—must be one that by limiting itself to none, takes in all; formless, because larger than any form?"

Hermann heard, waited, looked down upon the deck and thought, smoked hard at his pipe, which had nearly gone out, to get it well alight again; then at last said,—

"In matters of this kind, Tanṭawee, I prefer contenting myself with what lies clear and unmistakable before me, and try to make the best I can of present life and duty; what else is beyond and above me, I leave to Him who is above me, and He will, I do not question, take care of it. 'The day-dawn dispenses with the star,' as the Arab proverb says—the certain with the uncertain. And I for my part find occupation enough, and pleasure, too, in what surrounds me, to care little about trying to peep over the hedge and

see what lies, or does not lie, outside the garden. We shall get to that outside soon enough, and then there will be time plenty and to spare for thinking about it. I did not trouble myself about this world before coming into it; nor do I see any use in troubling myself about the next either before I reach it. He who has taken good care of me in the one, can, and doubtless will, take equally good care of me in the other, without my having to make bargains with Him, or to anticipate arrangements."

"A very practical way of looking at the subject," laughed Tanṭawee; "and in the meanwhile, what were your next adventures?"

"Such as you will hardly believe when you hear them," answered Hermann; "but believe or not, I can only tell you what happened; and if you choose to suppose me romancing, the fault is not mine, but yours, who asked me to tell the tale."

PART II.

O lost, and found, and lost again !
I cannot speak in prose or verse
This grief; yet fain would I rehearse,
As though rehearsal lessened pain.

Drear without thee the glittering day,
Though dawned on Carmel's purple height;
And drear the star-bespangled night
Upon the sea of Africa.

THE moon was up over the quiet waters, and the ship, scarcely impelled by the faint land-breeze, too gentle to ruffle the glassy surface of the sea, and only just catching in the upper sails, drifted slowly along with the coast current. High alongside rose the dark mass of Carmel; and about its base a few scattered and twinkling lights, indicative of quiet land-homes and Syrian life on shore, could, even at that distance, be discerned.

Hermann and Tanṭawee had separated for a time after their lengthened conversation, and had busied themselves the latter part of the afternoon—Hermann in looking over the arms and accoutrements of his men on board, with whom he was a great favourite; Tanṭawee in animated discussion of the coming Syrian campaign, with

some of the elder officers of the expedition. They had, however, met again for supper on the quarter-deck, drank their coffee together, and smoked their pipes, but without again touching on the topics of their noontide discourse.

At last, when the red western streak had wholly disappeared from the clear sky, and the "wolf's tail," as Arabs term the zodiacal light, alone marked the quarter of the heavens where the sun had set, Hermann rose, and standing on his carpet facing the *kibleh*,¹ now almost exactly astern of the vessel, went through the night prayers—a ceremony which, whether at home or on a journey, he rarely neglected. This done, he moved forward, and sat, silent and alone, near the prow of the ship, apparently observant of nothing but the shining ripple at the cutwater. *Ṭanṭawee* watched him for awhile across the dark figures of sailors and soldiers, already for the most part wrapped up in their cloaks asleep, and laid like chance bundles about the deck; but thought it best to leave him just then quiet to his own reflections, and not hurry him in renewing a story which evidently pained while it soothed the narrator—like a hand laid, however gently, on a sore.

But when the moon, now in her third quarter, was up

¹ The direction of the *Ka'abeh*, or sacred building of Mecca. Mahometans, wherever they may be, turn thither in prayer.

and shining over sea and ship, and Hermann still continued seated where he was, motionless and regardless of everything around, as if charmed, Tanṭawee thought it time to try and break the spell that seemed to have fallen on him. Night might else go by thus; the morning would come with all its cares of landing and disembarkment, of turmoil and bustle, of fighting, perhaps, and how then, in so busy a present, find leisure or inclination for stories of the past? So he, too, rose and went to the fore part of the ship; as he approached, he heard Hermann humming over to himself what sounded like the words of a song, which he ceased on noticing Tanṭawee close beside him.

“What was that you were repeating so? verses? or what else?” asked Tanṭawee; as, after a brief salutation, he took his place by his friend on the deck.

“Nothing; never mind,” replied Hermann; “mere nonsense. I will tell you another time, perhaps.”

Tanṭawee looked him full in the face; the moonlight showed it glistening with fresh-shed tears. Hermann turned his head aside. The Arab Beg took his friend’s hand gently in his own, and holding it, said, “Your thoughts were with her, and so were your verses; is it not so?”

The pressure of Hermann’s hand was the only answer he received; but it sufficed.

"You met again, I am sure," continued Tāṭāwee, taking advantage of this sign, such as it was, for reopening the subject about which he longed to hear.

"We did," answered Hermann, in a strangely toneless voice; "and—O God!—I could almost wish that we never had, at least that last time. God only knows how it may have ended with her; for me, would—" He broke off with a short bitter sob, and drew away his hand.

"Bear up; be a man, my dear fellow," said Tāṭāwee. "And, for our friendship's sake, for your own, for hers, perhaps, tell me how it ended. You have now been sitting here alone these two hours, brooding over these things, and freshening them up in your mind; it will do you good, believe me, to speak out once for all. If you keep thoughts of this kind close locked up in yourself, you will go mad some day."

"I am mad already, or nearly so," rejoined Hermann, "but you are right, I think. Sit down, then,"—for Tāṭāwee had risen and was standing before him,—"sit down, and I will tell you the whole, come what may. But first," he added, "swear to me by all you fear and all you hope, that you will never by word or sign recall anything of what you are about to learn of my miserable story—not even to myself."

The Beg gave the desired pledge, and Hermann,

having brushed the tears from his eyes and assumed an easier posture, thus continued his narrative :—

“On our arrival at Jezeerah, Aḳ-Arslan Beg took me into his dwelling, the huge battlemented building of black stone on the right-hand bank of the Tigris, near the landing-place, and gave me employment in his retinue, no more as a slave, but as a free man among his outriders or guards. My paper of manumission was duly made out before the ḳaḍee of the place and witnesses; I have it still. This done, I was the equal of my fellows; and soon, thanks to the Beg’s favour, came to be looked on as a person of some consideration amongst them. Besides, I soon proved myself to be a good rider, a sure marksman, and, in the athletic sports which formed our ordinary recreation, inferior to none, superior to many. The Pasha’s service—may God have mercy on him!—had been an excellent training school for me, and I had profited by it.

“Two months passed before I could get any information of the kind that my whole heart longed for from Diar-Bekr. Twice, indeed, during this period, the pursuit of thievish Koordes from the mountains, who had driven off some of Aḳ-Arslan’s cattle—for he was a great proprietor of live stock, and very knowing about it—took myself and the companions of my band almost up to Mardeen. But even then I could elicit from no

one tidings about the Sheykh Asa'ad the Sheybanee by my indirect questions, and I was afraid to put direct ones. Nor did my young Bedouin, Moharib, re-appear, though I expected him day by day, and often looked for him; till I began to think that something must have happened to him, or that he had forgotten his promises. Not that I cared much in truth whether I ever saw him again or not; but to my over-wrought fancy every disappointment took a form of exaggerated dimensions; and my sky, after a moment's brightening, seemed now overclouding anew.

“But at last, towards the beginning of the month of Doo-l-Ka'adeh,¹ when the days were growing on to their longest, and the summer heat to its hottest, came a joyful change. A messenger arrived, not from this place or that, but from Diar-Bekr itself. He was sent by a relative of my new master's; and the letter which he bore requested the honour of the Beg's presence at a family wedding, fixed for one of the weeks following the festival of Doheyya,² now not far off. The relative in question

¹ The eleventh month in the Mahometan year, and the second after the feast of Ramadan.

² This festival, also called “El-'Eyd,” or “The Festival,” by pre-eminence, occurs annually on the twelfth day of the month Doo-l-Hajjeh, the last of the Mahometan year, immediately following Doo-l-Ka'adeh.

was old and wealthy, and the degree of kinsmanship a tolerably near one ; so that, after some deliberation and delay—during which I, who knew how nearly the result would in all likelihood concern me, endured torments of anxiety little guessed by those around me—the Beg determined to comply with the invitation.”

“A prudent look-out, I suppose, for contingent reversions of something worth taking trouble for. Hang these strict observers ! the Beg was one of them, I conclude, by what you repeated of his conversation ; they always have an eye to the main chance. I declare, Ahmed, I was myself quite alarmed to see the business-like way in which you went about your prayers a couple of hours since.” This Tanṭawee said, not seriously, but intending to procure a diversion to his comrade’s melancholy. Hermann, however, let the banter go by apparently unnoticed ; only he paused half a minute, and then resumed :—

“What followed exceeded my hopes. Ak-Arslan called me to him, and—oh happiness !—ordered me to start at once with two others, and precede him to Diar-Bekr, there to announce his coming ; he himself would follow more at leisure in a week or so. At the same time he gave me in charge some letters, with directions to whom I was to deliver them, and some valuable ornaments of Bagdad gold-work, intended as a present for the future bride.

“With difficulty I restrained the agitation of excessive joy, and took his commands with an outward calmness which was far from my real feelings. Had a sceptre been placed in my hands, I should have received it with less exultation of heart than I did those letters. My horse and weapons were soon ready, and I set out, with many feigned complaints to the companions assigned me about the annoyance of so long a journey in the heat, and a great affectation of ignorance regarding Diar-Bekr, and everything there. I might have spared my dissimulation; for two thicker-witted Koordes than my two fellow-horsemen I never saw; eating, sleeping, and hectoring it over every one we met on the road, was all they seemed to understand doing.

“For myself, however boisterously disposed I often was at other times, I now cared little, or nothing rather, for these things. Our road was to Diar-Bekr, and its sole goal, so far as I was concerned, was Zahra’. Like one benumbed by the very excess of feeling, I went on mechanically, though eagerly; lending, indeed, a sort of forced attention to the way and its incidents, but really as indifferent to such surroundings as though I had been bodily in a desert land, a thousand miles away. Now that after so long an absence, such cruel delay, such anxious waiting, a hope of meeting, a certainty almost,—and that within a few days only,—was actually present,

the whole hidden under-current of desire, fear, and love, came suddenly up from the depths where it had always been flowing, though most times but half perceived, and in an instant overran the whole surface of my existence. One moment I pictured to myself the best that love could anticipate from the meeting of long-parted lovers; another, I experienced in imagination all the agony of arriving and finding her gone, or inaccessible to me, or dead; inconstant I could not dream her.

“In this state of mind every circumstance of the journey, however unimportant or unmeaning in itself, took colour from my wild fancy. I am not superstitious—”

“Indeed!” remarked Tanṭawee, half aloud; “are you quite sure of that?” The other went on—

“But now, the flight of a hoopoe or a yellow-hammer across the road, the unexpected sight of a gay flower, the meeting of a cheerful face, became an augury of happiness awaiting me; while a mottled crow,¹ a dead branch, or an ugly cripple by the wayside, darkened my mind with the shadow of omened evil. All this, however, resolved itself ultimately into one question undecided after a thousand idle conjectures and superfluous self-tortures: was she still where I had left her, in her

¹ A bird reckoned by Arab superstition of specially evil prognostic for lovers.

father's house? or had the expected Bedouin suitor—ill-luck betide him!—arrived, and borne her away to regions whither to follow might in reason appear a hopeless effort, and to discover her when there still more hopeless? These doubts were, however, destined to be dispelled before I reached Diar-Bekr.

“The sun was already half-way down between noon and setting; we had, for speed's sake, taken the shorter road by the hills, instead of the easier but circuitous track across the plain of Nisibeen; and were now on the second day of our departure from Jezeerah, between Mediad¹ and Mardeen. We had just descended by a narrow winding path down a steep slope, so thick set with underwood, then in its thickest of green leaf, that it was impossible to see even a few yards before our horses' heads; and emerging at the base of the declivity, we found ourselves in a small, treeless plain, perfectly level, and carpeted with green grass, where a stream, winding along the midmost of the valley, maintained freshness and moisture around it, even in the heat of summer. About a quarter of a mile in front rose the opposite range, exactly resembling that which we had just passed, and, like it, covered with dwarf oak and

¹ A large village in a defile of Karajah-Dagh, the mountain-range south of Diar-Bekr.

bush, amid which our way was next to lead; while on either side, to right and left, as we rode along, the valley stretched far away in a thwart direction.

“Arrived on the open flat, I instinctively looked round about me to enjoy the comparatively free view, and saw a figure rapidly approaching—almost at a running pace—from the far end of the valley. As it neared us, I recognised my adopted brother of Zakoo, young Moharib; he was accoutred after the ordinary Bedouin fashion, and carried in his hand the invariable switch; his only weapon was a sheath-knife stuck in his girdle. Though on foot he soon came up with our band, saluted us in general with the ‘Ah! welcome,’ of the desert;¹ and then, making for my horse’s side, kissed the hand which I held out and laid in his.

“‘Welcome to you, too, my brother! where do you come from? and where have you been all this while?’ said I. ‘I had almost given up hope of seeing you again.’

“‘I was with the men of my tribe,’ answered he, while he returned my greeting, ‘not far from this, in the plain to the south,’ pointing with his switch towards that

¹ The regular “Salam aleykum,” or “peace be on you,” of orthodox Mahometan use, is more often reserved by Bedouins for, so to speak, state occasions.

quarter. 'I heard that a party of you were going to Diar-Bekr; and, thinking that you might probably be one, I came by a cross-track to meet and accompany you a part of the way.'

" 'You have no horse,' said I, looking at his sandalled feet, 'and we are mounted: how can you keep up with us?'

" 'Some footmen may outstrip horsemen,'¹ rejoined Moḥarib. Then, drawing closer up, he made me a sign to fall back behind my companions. I did so.

" 'I have news for you, brother,' continued he. 'You know all about the Sheykh Asa'ad, and his family, and the Sheybanees of Diar-Bekr,—is it not so?'

" 'What of them?' I interrupted hastily; then, recollecting myself,—'What have I to do with them? or what interest have I in their news?'

" Moḥarib checked and quieted me. 'Never mind,' he said, 'do not be alarmed, and do not try to disguise yourself from me, my brother; there is no cause; besides, I know your story. What, however, I now have to tell you is this: that the Emeer Dagħfel, the Sheybane, is already on his way northward, and will be here in a month or so at most,—he and his men, fifty or sixty of them. There is no need to ask what his errand is.'

¹ Arab proverb.

"I remained silent; denial would, it was clear, avail me nothing. The lad was certainly in possession, if not of the whole, at any rate of the chief part, of what I had fancied my secret. What then? Could I trust in his fidelity—his discretion? Yet everything in his manner gave me to understand that I, or rather that Zahra'—for to her my thoughts turned instantly far more than to myself—was in no danger of inconsiderate disclosure where he was concerned. But how had he come to know it? What had he to do with the matter?

"Moharib easily divined my thoughts, and with his hand still on my bridle, continued, 'All is right, brother; but the roadside is no place for talk like this. I will explain it to you in the evening at Azkah,¹ where you will halt for a few hours; after that I shall leave you, but we shall meet again at Diar-Bekr.'

"I thanked him, and agreed to what he said. We then pressed forward, I trotting my horse, he running alongside with the lightness of foot peculiar to the Bedouins of the South, till we overtook my two companions, with whom we joined in vague conversation. A load was off my mind, and my tongue, tied up hitherto, was now loosened. The Koordes, on their part, saw nothing in the lad to arouse suspicion. They were ac-

¹ A small village on the Mardeen track.

customed to Bedouins of his class, and Moḥarib gave, before long, what was in their mind a fully sufficient reason for his, or any other Arab's, wishing to keep alongside of us, by a broad hint of his expectation to share in our supper that evening : an ordinary Bedouin manoeuvre. To this I added further plausibility by a story, invented to hand, of my having, some months previous, passed a night under the tents of his clansmen, the Benoo-Riaḥ, and having been hospitably entertained by them. The Koordes were satisfied, and inquired no more.

“ At sunset, we entered the long inclosures and single dirty street or lane of Azkah, where we took up our quarters in the rubble-built cottage of the village mukhtar.¹ While supper was preparing, Moḥarib found opportunity to talk with me in private, and gave me many particulars regarding my Nejdee rival, and his late movements.

“ The sum of what he told me was this. Dagḥfel had, it seems, been detained in the uplands of Zulfeh² during the whole of the autumn and winter seasons, by prolonged feuds between his tribe and their neighbours. With the arrival of spring, a settlement had at last

¹ The head man of a hamlet ; or, in towns, of a street quarter.

² A town on the north-east of Nejd.

been effected, and the Emeer put at liberty to make his own preparations, and finally to set out on his long-concerted journey.

“I was much too ignorant then of any Eastern geography, except that of the lands over which I had myself travelled, to be able to follow Moḥarib in his minute catalogue of the localities by which the Shey-banee caravan would have passed, or were about to pass; but this much was clear even to my apprehension, that the Emeer had already made more than half the distance, and would within a few weeks be in person at Diar-Bekr. His stay there, said my informant, might be expected to last a fortnight or somewhat more; after which he and his men would return to their ordinary quarters below Zulfeh, taking his bride—my Zahra’—along with him.

“My heart sank at the thought; I could not even speak; but Moḥarib cheered me, and encouraged me to believe that my chances were not so very desperate after all; the contrary rather. But to my many inquiries as to the means by which I might succeed, the plan of action which I should follow when the time came, I could for the moment obtain no distinct answer.

“‘Do not trouble yourself about that yet,’ he said; ‘be prudent, keep quiet, and wait; to each time its

counsel ; the night is long, and the moon up ;¹ when the moment comes, I will not be wanting. My brother,' he added, with the warmth of evident sincerity in his words, 'trust me ; may I be your ransom, but I will help you to obtain what you desire, or I will die at your feet.' We both wept.

" 'But how did you become aware of my love?' I asked.

" 'Hearts have eyes,' he answered. 'Your face, the tone of your voice, everything about you told me that you were a lover the first moment I saw you. My cousin too, he whom you met a year ago in the market-place at Moşool, and there questioned you about the Sheykh Asa'ad, said that you seemed to have some special knowledge of the sheykh and his family ; and from this I was led to conjecture who was the object of your love. The rest I learnt in Diar-Bekr, where I was last month ;—do not be alarmed : it was not told me by any one outside, but by a girl of the house itself, a maid of the haram ; and she, too, knew very little, nothing indeed. But what she said served me to understand more ; the dawn is evident to him who has eyes.² No one else, I am sure, has guessed

¹ A Bedouin proverb, implying that there is no hurry.

² Arab proverb.

anything; and as to the girl, I will engage for her silence. However,' he added, with the stealthy glance around peculiar to his race, 'one cannot be over cautious in affairs of this sort; and when you get to Diar-Bekr, do not forget to remain perfectly quiet at first; go nowhere, and wait till I come.'

"We had renewed our conversation after supper; it was a murky starless night, and we were standing behind a cowshed outside the house. Again and again I begged him not to delay his arrival in the town; again and again he renewed his promise, and advised caution. He then bade me farewell, and disappeared in the darkness. I re-entered the room where we had taken our meal, and found the red glow of the wood-embers on the hearth its only light, and my two Koordes fast asleep and snoring on the dais near by. How changed they, the room, everything looked in my eyes!

"Next morning we reached Mardeen; and after a short halt galloped on again. The third day before noon we came in sight of the well-known gardens and the black walls behind, passed the gates, and entered Diar-Bekr. I could have thrown myself on the ground and kissed the pavement of the streets as we went along.

"Without loss of time, we inquired for the abode of Afsheen Beg; that was the name of my master's kins-

man. To reach it we had to traverse the whole length of the sook. It was market day, and the crowded state of the narrow and crooked thoroughfares nearly put me beside myself with impatience at our frequent delays. After the sook followed a few more turnings, till at last we arrived at the outer gate of a large and well-built house; the portal was prettily carved in stone. Here we alighted; my comrades remained with the horses in the courtyard below, and I, after being properly announced, went upstairs with my letters and presents.

"Afsheen Beg was snugly seated in a corner of his large divan, well cushioned around, and, though it was the hottest time of the day, and almost of the year, wrapped in a wide mantle of choice furs. His beard was white, his shoulders bent, his face wrinkled, and his whole form shrunk with age. As I respectfully saluted and stood before him, I thought to myself, 'And is it to such as these that girls sell themselves for money, or are sold?'"

"Yes," here interposed Tantawee, "precisely to such as these, and are very glad of their bargain too. Men and women alike, though perhaps, on the whole, women more than men; that which they call love is most often, excuse me for saying it, mere selfishness under a fine name. The object, I admit, is apt to

differ, since the man's side of the bargain is commonly the gratification of sensual passion ; the women's, money, rank, and ornament."

"Did I think so—" broke in Hermann, "but no, it is your own cynical nature that speaks, not the truth of fact."

"Fact and truth too," answered Tântawee. "Look around you. Yet I admit there are some rare exceptions ; a few among men, a fewer still among women ; still there are some."

"My experience is wholly contrary," said Hermann. "I have found much true friendship among men, much deep love in women. I too myself have loved, do yet love ; and I can no more question the sincerity of my love where I give it, than I can that of my hatred where I feel it ; and I judge of others by myself. Unloving natures are, to my mind, the exception ; loving ones the rule ; whether East or West, Asiatic or European, men or women. Race has little to do with this, climate less, sex nothing at all. The manner and the manifestation may and do vary ; but the nature is the same in all, and love is no less essential to it than life."

"Well, may you never have cause to alter your opinion," replied his friend. "But remember, I admitted that there are exceptions ; and it is exactly

because you yourself are one of them that you think as you do."

"How so?" asked Hermann.

"I mean," replied the other, with a half-laugh, "you allowed that you judge of others by yourself. Of course you do: every one does. Now hear me: the man who can forget his own interests, can love, so can the woman; but such are rare, Ahmed Beg—rarer than you imagine. I am willing to believe," he added, "that your Zahra' was one of these; so too, if his professions were genuine, was your Moharib. But, then it is not every one who would have met them or to whom they would have turned. Like to like holds good in these things, as in most: you are unselfish yourself, and naturally meet with unselfishness in others,—that is, where it can possibly be met with."

"Is that your opinion of me?" said Hermann, in a doubting tone of voice. Tanṭawee now laughed outright, and laid his hand caressingly on his young friend's shoulder.

"For all your twenty-five years you are only a silly boy," said he; "and boys are generally unselfish till they learn better—or worse. Well for you if you never learn, and remain a boy all your life. Now go on with your story." Hermann complied.

"The old Beg was overjoyed at our arrival; and the

presents, which were in truth very handsome—I longed to set aside a few of these ornaments for my Zahra', but that was impossible—completed his delight. He gave orders to have us lodged in the most comfortable quarters, and set the best of his house before us. His hospitality was lost on me, who was too pre-occupied to appreciate its advantages; not so on my companions, who revelled heartily in the good cheer set before them, besides giving themselves airs of importance in proportion to the studied courtesy of our host. My own feeling was one of satisfaction too, but arising from a very different cause,—namely, the liberty left me to pursue my own plans and objects, by the eagerness of my fellows in enjoying their animal comforts.

“Dinner over, an hour yet remained before sunset. I had not forgotten Moharib's advice; but thought there could be no harm in using this time for looking a little about me. So I strolled out, and sauntered from street to street, from *kaḥwah* to *kaḥwah*, joining freely in conversation with all I met. My dress, which now was that of an ordinary Koordish horseman, and totally unlike the cut of my former clothes; my increased height and breadth; my bearing and face, which now showed alike the impress of fatigues and danger endured, and of freedom won; in fine, a general air of manliness—though you do call me a boy, Tanṭawee—disguised me awhile

from many who would have at once recognised the smooth-featured, well-dressed, silver-ornamented slave-lad of fifteen months before.

“But a few of the keener-sighted townsfolk knew me again, in spite of change ; the news of my arrival quickly passed from them to others, and a crowd of questioners and listeners gathered around me. Many were the inquiries about what had happened at Bagdad, how I came to have left that place, what I was doing at present, how I had acquired my liberty, etc., etc. In return I found out that which most I wanted to learn—that no change had occurred in the circumstances of the Sheykh Asa’ad and his household ; all was, at least in common town-talk and belief, on the old footing ; nor did any one by word, hint, or gesture, so much as imply the least consciousness of my having any particular interest in that quarter. Satisfied so far, I returned to the house, and slept on an easy mattress more comfortably than I had done for many nights past.

“But next morning my old restlessness returned. So near the aim of all my longings, and yet debarred from their possession ; so near Zahra’, yet not only unable to see her, but even to acquaint her with my nearness ! For two or three hours I roamed up and down, here and there, hoping every moment to meet Moḥarib ; but no Moḥarib appeared. Time passed ; the shadows shortened,

and my impatience, once indulged, grew and became uncontrollable, like water that has begun its way through a dam by degrees, then strengthens every minute, and at last bursts down all before it. In an evil hour, I resolved to try my fortune myself, and single-handed."

Tantawee shook his head. "You ought to have waited. The young fellow had his reasons, and good ones I am sure, in the advice he gave you. The caution of these long-headed Bedouins is seldom at fault, but it is never superfluous; I have often experienced it when dealing with them."

"I now see that I was wrong," said Hermann; "but I was then in a state of mind incapable of right reasoning; and, as matters turned out, had I acted otherwise, the result would have been much the same. My folly was, however, none the less. But this is useless self-reproach; let me continue my story.

"Blessing inwardly the length of the summer day, I turned my steps in a well-known direction, and soon found myself before the gate of my former master's chief friend, the proprietor of the dearly-loved garden and kiosk, Rustoom Beg. I entered the house; the Beg received me with all the profusion of affectionate welcome, that an elderly and childless man often shows to a young one; to which was besides added a special tenderness of feeling towards me, induced by the memory of pleasant

by-gone times, and of poor Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo Pasha, then so often his guest. He too, was insatiate of hearing; and I had again to recount in their fullest detail all the sad events of the winter and the spring; and next to follow them up with the narrative of my own escape, my meeting with Ak-Arslan Beg at Moşool; how I had entered his service, how come to Diar-Bekr.

“But this was not enough; the whole household naturally imitated the example of their lord, in demonstrations of undiminished friendship, and in endless questions, alternating with equally endless civilities. Coffee followed pipes, and pipes coffee; then came a copious noonday meal, with relays of sliced cucumbers, fruits, melons, and the rest; then more pipes and more coffee, till I began to fear I should never find leisure for getting away, and enjoying the run, now mine once more, of the garden. Besides, the Beg and his men each one thought—a slight mistake on their part—that my only object in coming was to see them. God bless them! I really felt half-ashamed of my own forced double-dealing with them, and my intense inward impatience to be rid of their well-meant kindnesses; but ‘behind the hillock there is what there is,’¹ as my friend Moḥarib might have said.”

¹ Arab proverb.

"I remember the saying," interposed Tanṭawee; "only in this instance the relative positions of the maid and the youth were, it seems, reversed."

"However," Hermann continued, "some dropped off at last one way, and some another; till, when the afternoon was tolerably advanced, I was able to steal into the garden unobserved and alone.

"You may imagine how warily, how quickly I skulked along among the trees; how nimbly I climbed the pear-tree; how excitedly I gazed across the wall as I stood on my old look-out. To no purpose; except the plash of the running fountain, and the occasional rustle of a bird, silence reigned over the neighbouring shrubbery. I could trace, as I had before, the avenue running through it; but neither black face nor white greeted my view. It might be, thought I—it was more probable—that tidings of my arrival had not yet penetrated to the Sheykh's ḥaram; yet, again, it was just possible that they might; if so, surely she would devise means to make me some signal, and where should she expect me but here?

"In vague, and, as I could not but acknowledge to myself, almost groundless, hope, I waited for about half an hour; every minute convincing me more and more of the uselessness of my staying, yet unable to leave the spot so full of my happiest remembrances. Then sud-

denly—O despair!—I heard the sound of steps and the buzz of many voices approaching from the house, in the garden. I strained ear and eye. No; there was no mistaking; it was old Rustoom Beg himself, with a whole suite of attendants, come out to take the air and drink their afternoon coffee. In the kiosk? Yes; evidently they were making for the kiosk. Unsuspecting? or had they guessed—God forbid it!—who was there before them?

“‘Hang it!’ groaned I to myself, ‘it is summer, and now that they have once thought of this place, they will always be coming here. What is to be done?’

“Recollecting myself, however, I slid quietly but expeditiously down from my post, took a round among the trees behind, and, a few minutes later, re-appeared on the main-path, looking as innocent as I could, and with the air of having come by chance from a different part of the grounds, just in time to meet the Beg and his party, who, sauntering leisurely up, then reached the kiosk.

“I saluted them with assumed surprise; then joined them. One of them who had the key with him, opened the creaking door. Its hinges gave notice by their stiffness of not having been turned for many a day. We entered a bare, dusty room, foul with cobwebs, and ascended a narrow inside staircase. It led us out by a second door,

also not easy to open from long disuse, right on the roof, precisely on the very spot where I had, not five minutes before, been stationed on my worse than useless watch.

"The brown dust of Diar-Bekr lay thick on the plaster, and an attentive eye could detect the places where my tread had recently disturbed it. A like careful inspection might reveal something ruffled and broken in the small twigs and foliage of the pear-tree alongside.

"'Look here; somebody has been on the roof to-day; he must have clambered up from the outside,' remarked one of the suite.

"'How could that have been?' asked I, trying to seem very ignorant and surprised.

"Whether the Beg heard the remark or not, I do not know; certainly he said nothing about it; but seating himself gravely on the carpet which his servants spread for him, took in hand his pipe ready lighted, and leaned composedly back against the cushions, enjoying the view, and talking with the nearest of the attendants about him, and especially with me. If he suspected any one in particular of being the trespasser, his manner did not indicate that I was the one.

"'We must have a parapet raised on the right-hand side of this roof,' said Rustoom Beg when after an hour and a half of smoke and chat he got up to leave his carpet. Just then, the declining rays of the sun, soon about to dis-

appear behind the trees, reddened the latticed windows and the long wall of the haram opposite, on which the shadow of the upper part of the kiosk itself, and of our heads too, showed with admirable distinctness. 'A parapet must be built and the garden wall heightened, too. Why—I beg pardon of God!—this roof looks right into Sheykh Asa'ad's haram. Strange that none of us should have noticed this before; but to be sure, it is now only four years since the haram was built, and the kiosk has been shut up all that time. God reminded me of it only this day.'

"'Health and safety to our master; may God ever remember him for good, and keep him from all ill-fortune! no one certainly has been here on the roof of the kiosk for the last four years,' compliantly subjoined one of the chibookjees.¹ I could have hugged the fellow for saying so; it gave me breath again. I had been in a perfect agony lest any one should make a contrary remark. But in my agitation I could not help stealing a glance—though against my will—towards the other servant, a kahwajee,² a man of about thirty,

¹ The term chibookjee, properly denotes one whose duty it is to look after his master's pipe; hence it has become synonymous with our "valet" in general.

² This term literally means one who has care of the coffee for the household; but in common acceptance is nearly equivalent with our "butler."

who had attempted to draw observation to the step-prints on the roof when we first came up. I saw him now, though silent, looking hard at me. Our eyes met, —mine must have had a guilty expression in them; I felt that they had, and was heartily sorry for having turned my face in that direction. Again I remembered —but now in bitterness of spirit—Moharib's reiterated advice to attempt nothing before his arrival, and repented when repentance was too late.

“‘See to it,’ said the Beg to his kaḥiya, as they slowly descended the stair-case, ‘that the parapet be built, and the wall properly heightened to-morrow.’ ‘It shall be done, please God,’ answered the other. Had the proposed constructions, with all their stone and mortar, been raised then and there upon my breast, I could not have felt more suffocated.

“We followed the Beg; I was the last of the party to leave the roof, but at the very moment that I turned to enter the narrow door leading to the steps, I heard what sounded like the cry of a wood-bird from precisely that quarter of the adjoining garden whence a similar sound had first reached me so long before. It was the same sound, yet not altogether the same, as then. I could not tell. None but myself heard or remarked it, and I, though with great difficulty, restrained myself from any outward sign; but the steps swam round with

me, and I had to steady myself against the staircase-wall.

“‘The Beg will go early to-morrow morning on a visit to the Sheykh Asa’ad, to explain and apologise about the kiosk,’ said one of the retinue, a native of Diar-Bekr, to me, as we sat together in a *kaḥwah* of the market-place, over a *nargheelah*, that evening.

“To have pretended ignorance as to who Sheykh Asa’ad was would have been awkward, and indeed, in my then state of feeling, impossible for me. So I contented myself by asking,—‘Was that large reddish building the Sheykh’s *ḥaram*? and does the garden next yours belong to it?’ with a certain off-hand air of careless curiosity.

“‘Exactly so; the garden,’ answered he, ‘belongs to the *ḥaram*, and both of them to Sheykh Asa’ad. There will be grand doings in his house before long; though with what result God best knows.’ He sunk his voice at the latter part of the sentence.

“‘What do you mean?’ I inquired, my curiosity now really excited by his change of tone.

“‘Nothing,’ he said, ‘only that the Sheykh, men say, has promised his only daughter, a miracle of beauty if report be true—praise be to Him who created her!—to a Bedouin cousin of theirs from Nejd. They are all Sheybanees, and much too proud for marrying

here among us. Well, if they like to fancy themselves great folks, why, it pleases them and hurts nobody—they will not be the richer for it, nor we the poorer. But the upshot is that the Bedouin will soon be here, and fetch her away to his tents and camels.’

“‘Perhaps,’ I suggested tentatively, ‘no better offer was made for the girl that her family could have accepted.’

“‘No!’ answered he, ‘there are fifty Begs and Aghas who would any one of them have been glad to get her; and she might have now been living comfortably in one of the finest houses here, with all she could wish. But her father—curse him for an Arab!—would hear of no one but this cousin, and so he is to have her after all.’

“‘All right; it is much the same to her, I suppose,’ said I, desirous indeed to prolong the conversation, yet scarcely knowing how to do so.

“‘No,’ he replied; ‘they say, on the contrary, that she does not like it at all; her family have settled it in spite of her. But let the Bedouin look to it when he does marry her, or the Jinnee¹ may be too much for him in the end.’

“‘The Jinnee!’ I exclaimed, ‘what is that? Tell me about it, brother.’

¹ A well-known spirit of common Eastern superstition.

“ ‘Why,’ answered he, ‘people say—God knows the truth¹—that last spring, about the same time that the Bagdad Pasha and the rest of you were here, or soon after, the Sheykh’s daughter was snatched away by a Jinnee,—God preserve us from the like. It is certain that the maid-servants of the haram noticed her going out at early dawn into the garden ; then she disappeared entirely. They sought her everywhere and could not find her ; at last, about noon, they discovered her lying on her face in a spot which everybody knows has always been haunted—an old bit of ruin, close under the garden-wall. She did not move when they came up, or give any sign of life. So they carried her as she was into the house, and read the Kōran over her² till she came to herself, which she soon did. But for all they questioned her, she would never say a word on what had happened to her. Only from that day forward her cheeks, which had been like Damascene roses, faded ; and her stature drooped, like a bough without water.

“ ‘Besides, she would often get up in the dead of the night, and go on the haram roof ; where she would

¹ This, and similar devout-sounding interpolations, occur so frequently in the conversation of the lower orders especially throughout the East, that they cannot be entirely omitted, even in a free translation like the present.

² The ordinary Mahometan recipe for such cases.

remain till morning looking towards the south, whence, there is no doubt, the Jinnee—may God confound him!—was wont to come and visit her.

“‘ Her father, the Sheykh, called in the most learned Koran-readers in the town and neighbourhood to drive away the Jinnee from her, but they could do nothing. At last, a month ago, she suddenly vanished a second time, how nobody knows, for a whole day. When she re-appeared at home her face was red, her eyes were bright, her stature erect—God bless and keep her! From that hour since she has been just as she was before the Jinnee, curse him! visited her. They think he has left her alone; but her maids say that she is afraid to marry, lest the evil one—God guard us all!—should break her bridegroom’s neck, or transform him into a dog, or some other shape, on the wedding night.’

“Here my friend stopped, and ‘took refuge with God,’ in the customary formula.

“I repeated it after him, for appearance’ sake; thinking all the while what a different interpretation I could give to the Jinnee and the rest of it! But, ah, Zahra! what have you not endured on my account; and which is greatest, your courage or your love? And I—how can I ever requite your love! O God, give us good for all this misery.

“Little heart was left me for continuing the talk;

but I felt that it would not do to break off too abruptly, so I said :

“ Very singular that the kiosk roof should have been left without a parapet, and that no one should have noticed it before till this afternoon.’

“ ‘I will bet you anything you like,’ answered the man, with a laugh which, however, had no personal meaning for myself in it, ‘that it has been often noticed already, and made use of too, by some of those on either side of the wall, only they took good care to say nothing about it. As for the Beg, I cannot for my life imagine what brought him to the kiosk to-day; I am sure he had not been there for years : it was a curious fancy. The haram buildings are modern; that is true.’

“ What further talk we had I do not remember, but I well remember my sleeplessness that night; indeed, between hope, fear, regret, anxiety, and love, I was little likely to sleep. She was there; she had heard of my arrival; else how that signal? Was it she herself? No; of that I could not feel sure; yet it must have been by her order, if not her own giving.

“ Moharib too; I now understood that he had at least been no idle boaster; he had undoubtedly, though how I could not imagine, established some kind of communication between her and intelligence from the outer world : so much was clear from the story I heard that evening,

and taken in connection with, had rightly explained, what the lad himself had told me at Azkah.

“But, more than all, she was still the same for me, still faithful, still resolved that nothing should separate her from me; still mistress, in a manner, of her own lot, and determined to remain so. The thought of what her constancy must have cost her was torture to my heart; but the hopeful assurance of future meeting and happiness almost changed that torture to delight.

“Thus far everything was well beyond my expectations, almost beyond my hopes. But Rustoom Beg’s visit to the kiosk, for the first time, and exactly when I was there; his remarks about the roof, the wall; and the subsequent order given—could these be the result of mere accident? or was it not rather design? and by what instigation? to what end? I would not credit it; it could not be; impossible that he should have guessed anything about me or her; yet, if it was not for that, for what else was it? Then, again, the remark made about the footmarks, how unlucky! and my own looks, they must have told against me. No—it was all my own imagination—yet no; I was really under suspicion; if not before, now at least the kahwahjee, confound him, would talk me over to his master; and what might the consequences be, what might they not be, for myself—for her? Then, too, what was I to do next day?

The kiosk ? that was at an end. The garden ? it would be full of workmen, of spies perhaps. And what if she, unaware of these events, of these changes, were to wait hour after hour on the other side ? Worse yet if she attempted any fresh signal ; might not the look-out discover her also ? Could I manage to give her timely warning ? And, again, if I did not come what would she think—she watching for me in vain ? Insupportable thought ! Yet how prevent it ?

“ Out of this labyrinth I could see no clue except Moharib. He had told me to expect him ; how then if he failed to appear ? True, were he once in the town, I could trust his sagacity for finding me out ; but a Bedouin’s movements are uncertain : he might be at this very moment far away ; he might be detained by his clansmen’s affairs ; and how was I to know how long to wait ? To attempt anything was dangerous ; to attempt nothing was, I knew, for me impossible.

“ Well, whatever might be on the morrow, a few hours’ sleep would perhaps settle my mind, and put me in a condition to devise something reasonable. I lay down ; I might as well have tried to sleep on an ant’s nest ; I turned this way, and that way, covered my face, and uncovered it ; no sleep was to be had at any price ; and the morning, when it came, found me more tired, but even more wakeful, than when I lay down.”

"You ought to have consoled yourself," remarked Tanṭawee, "by recalling to mind, since you have a taste that way, all the pretty verses of amatory poets, proclaiming sleep to be absolutely out of the question for a genuine lover; in fact, I am not clear whether you have not forfeited your claim to that honourable title by wishing and trying to go to sleep."

"That may be well enough in poetry," answered Hermann; "but in practice it is very disagreeable; and I doubt if even Ebn-el-Fariḍ or Mejnoon-'Aamir really liked it when they experienced it; unless indeed, which I think much the more probable, what they say on this subject, as on many others, is mere poetic fiction. 'They say what they do not,' as the Koran has it of them."

"What God and His prophet say is the truth,"¹ answered Tanṭawee, with mock gravity. "But please remember that I, for one, am not in love, nor have the smallest intention of being so, and I should like to get a little sleep some hour of this quiet night, if for nothing else, in view of the hard work before us to-morrow; so be a good fellow, and let me hear how the affair ended; because, if you do not tell me before I lie down, I might remain awake thinking about it."

¹ The stereotyped phrase of orthodox Mahometans whenever the Koran is quoted in their presence.

Hermann went on.

"It ended according to the ordinary rule of life, that where one anticipates many difficulties, one finds few; just as where one anticipates few, one finds many. Next morning, I had to go early into the town on some business of my master's which there was no shirking. It would occupy me, I calculated, till nearly mid-day, and my greatest fear was lest the Koordes, my travelling-companions, should propose, one or both of them, accompanying me; but they, installed at their ease in a large apartment of the superannuated bridegroom's house near the outer door, resolutely declined to take part in any occupation except those of smoking, eating, drinking, sleeping, and the like sedentary or recumbent enjoyments, to which, for my part, they were perfectly welcome.

"Well pleased to be alone, I set out on my way to the sook, vainly looking to right and left as I went along for a square inch of Moharib's brown-red cloak, and puzzling myself as to what I should do when noon left me at liberty. But before reaching the market-place, just as I was turning out of a by-way into the main-street leading to the bridge, a small blackamoor in a very dirty shirt for his sole dress, and with a bare woolly head, trotted up alongside of me, and with a knowing grin, put something into my hand. It was a piece of paper

closely folded up. I opened it; inside was written in Arabic, 'After mid-day; the door with the red mark; come.'

"There was nothing else; neither name or address; they would, indeed, have been merely superfluous. However, I would gladly have asked a question or two of the imp who had brought the message; but while my attention was occupied in unfolding and reading the paper, he was already off like a shot, and on my making a hasty step after him only grinned the more and ran the faster. There was no one else in the street.

"Refolding the precious document, and hiding it carefully in my breast-pocket, I went, light of heart, to my work. The hours went by slowly enough to my eager impatience. At last they brought the time appointed.

"Noon, a still, burning noon, under a sky dim and drowsy with the southerly wind, was proclaimed from the seventy-five tall minarets of Diar-Bekr. Prayers were said, and the inhabitants, issuing from the mosques, went to doze away the hot hours, or, at all events, shut themselves up in their darkened rooms. The shops were closed, the *kahwahs* empty, the streets dusty and deserted. I remained a little while seated on a stone bench in the courtyard of a small mosque from which the last worshipper except myself had departed. The

sun blazed silently on the clean white-washed walls before me, and sparkled in the little fountain and its overflowing water-troughs. I was impatient to be about my search after the door so vaguely indicated, yet almost reluctant to move; like a man on the edge of a pool, stripped for plunging, and hesitating before the plunge. The heat, too, and the heavy air combined to oppress me.

“But now or never; I must be up and doing. The moment was favourable; no eye watched me; only a beggar at the mosque door laid fast asleep on the flags of the yard; the very dogs had retreated to their coolest and darkest haunts. My first object was to get, unnoticed by unseasonable friends and acquaintances, to the quarter of the town where stood the house of Sheykh Asa’ad. This was soon done; I had not twenty minutes to walk and needed no guide. The next task, one not equally easy, was to discover the outside wall, if such there was of the haram, or at any rate of some building immediately connected with it: since it was evident that the door indicated by the message could be looked for nowhere else.

“I reached the place, and began reconnoitring it with the exactest possible scrutiny. The dwelling of the Sheykh stood not far beyond the old town walls on the east; on three sides it was surrounded by garden; the fourth side

was free, and overlooked a shady narrow path, leading down to the river. A long brick wall, behind which, so far as I could make out, ran a covered gallery, connected the house itself in this direction with the haram buildings. These last formed an oblong block, which presented one only of its four faces, and that one of the two narrower, to the road; at its angle the garden wall turned, and continued to run on, very high in this part, and built with jealous care to exclude all chance prying into what was behind it; till, after a considerable distance, it joined the enclosure and grounds of old Rustoom Beg. Thus the haram stood, so far as its front and two sides were concerned, entirely in its own garden. On one end it was connected with the Sheykh's dwelling-house; what outlet or communication it might have on the other I did not know; the back of the dwelling was on the public road.

"I began at the further extremity, where Sheykh Asa'ad's own house and garden bordered the way. Here were indeed the indications of three entrances: one was blocked up and disused; the other two, a greater and a lesser, were open; but I saw no mark near them, nor did I expect to see any; it was the men's quarter. Leaving these, I came opposite to the connecting wall, and the haram itself. Here, passing leisurely along, I surveyed door after door, and even, in a sort of desperate

self-delusion, window after window ; but on none could I perceive the slightest trace of a red mark, or what could be construed into such, and give reasonable warrant for a trial of any kind. Marks enough there were, no doubt ; but they were unquestionably mere weather-stains, nothing more ; besides, they were marks of long standing, not less than of self-formed shape ; whereas, the one that I was directed to look for, would, in every probability, be fresh ; and of a kind to draw at once the attention of a person seeking for it by pre-concerted agreement. No token of the sort was on this side certainly.

“Anxious and depressed I turned, the angle ; here at first it was worse. All down the corner from top to bottom was neither door or window of any sort, size, or shape whatsoever. Remained the furthestmost and high-built part ; under the shadow of this I now went, till, when I had surveyed full half its length, still finding nothing, and with disappointment deepening at every step into despondency, my eyes were cheered by the sight of a low door, on one side of which was a slight but clear red mark, an oblique dash, as though made by a finger dipped in paint. It was evidently quite fresh, and if anticipated, could not fail to be noticed ; scarcely otherwise.

“With a long-drawn breath, and a heart beating fit to

burst the numerous buttons of my tight upper dress, I stopped, and looked around. On my right hand to the front was a narrow barren patch of stone-strewed ground; beyond it a field of maize, now green and tall; further on yet, an irregular indentation of lines caused by mounded banks and scrag tufts of brushwood, marked the course of a stream, winding down towards the Tigris; but on that side there led neither road nor lane, only a small footpath; the blackish ranges of Karajah Dagh closed the view. Behind me where I stood, tall trees shut everything in; on my left was the wall.

"No human being appeared in sight: a sparrow-hawk wheeling high in the air, and uttering now and then a plaintive cry, gave the only sound and motion to the dead calm of summer noon. I turned and faced the wall: it was very high, three times the stature of a man, or rather more; and, except this one entrance, offered no break in its dingy continuity. Yet a moment I lingered in a last hesitation; and then, saying 'in the name of God,' rapped gently, and once only, at the door.

"It opened on the instant, no key had to be turned or bolt withdrawn; the person within was clearly expectant, and perhaps afraid of anything that might occasion unnecessary noise or delay. That person was a black eunuch; tall, raw-boned, and ugly enough to have on that score alone disarmed the most suspicious jealousy.

He beckoned me in. I entered. 'Under thy veil, O Veiler !'¹ he muttered, as he reclosed the door behind me, but this time he bolted it carefully.

"I took a survey of the place. It was a moderate-sized room, lighted by one close, latticed window immediately below the ceiling. The earth-floor was partly covered with coarse matting ; the walls were indifferently plastered, and a country-made carpet, its gaudy colour-bands much faded, was spread on a raised and plastered dais to represent furniture : of which, if I except a small oil-lamp in a niche above the dais, there was none else. Some red pitchers and coils of rope in one corner of the room, and a balta,² thrown in another, announced that these were the quarters of some menial employed in the wood-hewing and water-drawing line for the service of the Sheykh's haram. This was indeed the Soodanee who stood before me, his quality of eunuch permitting him such close proximity to the female section of the household ; for the room belonged to the haram itself, though not reckoned among the regular apartments.

"The old fellow, for old the deep wrinkles on his hideous beardless face announced him to be, bade me

¹ A title under which the Deity is often invoked among Mahometans.

² A rough country axe.

welcome in a low voice, and assured me that I had nothing to fear; all was right. Then, checking the questions I was about to ask, and ordering, rather than telling me, to remain perfectly still and quiet where I was, he left me, passing out by another door which led whither I did not yet know, and cautiously shutting it after him by a bolt on the outside.

"In a couple of minutes more—a couple of hours I deemed them—the bolt was withdrawn, and the door opened gently. But this time it was no negro that passed through it; it was she, Zahra' herself, in a light in-door dress; over her head was cast a thin white veil, which she removed from her face as she came forward; a gold-embroidered girdle and a braid of pearls in her long dark hair were the only ornaments she wore that day. Calm, self-possessed, as I ever remembered her, but, to my eyes, somewhat taller and statelier and even lovelier than before, she entered with a smile brighter than the sunlight without, and, holding out her hand, welcomed me.

"You, Tantawee, are not and never were, I believe, a lover."

"No, thank Heaven," said the other: "never was, and hope never to be. I am not disposed to purchase a lump of sugar with a mountain of gall."

"Be it as you will," continued Hermann; "but I

hold that the sugar is the mountain and the gall a very small lump indeed compared with it. I will not—I need not—say how I answered her greeting; how the first minutes passed, nor how the first half hour. Enough,—you asked me what I was humming over to myself when you first came up; now hear:—

“Such love as hers I ne’er have found:
Such love as hers I ne’er shall find.
The chain in one our hearts that wound
Round other hearts may hardly wind.
I called it love: ’twas more than love;
I called it passion: vain the word.
Nor depths below, nor heights above,
Such passion knew, such joys averred.

“’Tis past, ’tis gone,—a weight there lies
Within the heart; a want is there;
The ceaseless longing of blind eyes
To read some page of lettered care.
The page is blank; nor keenest sight
Could aught avail,—but sight is none;
While all around day’s cheerful light
Beams, cheerless to those eyes alone.”

And saying this he threw his two arms across the bulwark of the ship, leant down his head between them, and exclaiming “O God! O God!” burst out into an agony of grief, painful alike to witness and to endure.

Tantawee looked at him with deep concern, and could hardly restrain his own tears, but did not say a word,

or move from where he was; judging it better for his friend to come round by himself, and on coming round find sympathy close by to comfort him. Five minutes passed thus; then Hermann slowly raised his head, his eyes were swollen, but were now tearless,—he drew his sleeve across his face.

“Do not mind me,” he said in a low voice, but steady, though without looking up. “It is over now—only hand me the water-jug.”

Tantawee did so in silence. Hermann washed his face with a sort of violence, swallowed a large draught of water, righted himself, and then, of his own accord and quickly, as if fearing lest his companion should say anything, resumed his story.

“We remained for about two hours in conversation. I was impatient to hear at once all about herself from her own lips; how the time had passed with her since our separation—with what fears, what hopes, what pleasures, what pains, what cares for the present, what plans for the future, how she had contrived this very meeting, how screened herself, and me too, from danger and discovery. But before she would satisfy my curiosity on any of these points, she insisted on my relating to her, one after another, the events, strange or sad, which had varied my life during the time of our separation. The narrative was brief, for her quick

intelligence seemed to divine beforehand whatever I told, and to anticipate my words. While I was speaking she remained still and listening, her eyes fixed on my face with a look in which it would have been hard to say whether attention, sympathy, or love predominated; and when I had finished she put her hand in mine—we were seated as in the old days, side by side—and said, ‘My dearest, my only love; dearest Ahmed.’

“I gazed in her face—it was the same as I had first known it, except that the light cheerfulness of its former expression, though still there, was now tempered with a graver look of settled resolve and will; her eyes seemed larger, too; her forehead whiter; her cheeks, now indeed flushed with pleasure, were habitually paler than before; there was even a something in her features that told of pain endured, till its endurance had become in a manner usual to her. She was thinner also, and, with a slight increase of height, had acquired a new dignity of demeanour; the almost childlike quickness of movement that she displayed a year before, had now calmed and steadied itself into perfect grace. I was in a mist of happiness.

“‘Zahra’, ah, dearest Zahra’,’ said I, ‘all these things that I have related are nothing to me—less than nothing. Slavery, danger, wounds, hunger, want, weariness, the heat of the day, the night chill—I do not

account them, I do not feel them, I do not know if they are or not, so your love, yours only, be mine. Ah, might I be dead, so you would but visit my grave; might I be dust, so your foot trod on me. Ah! I do not know what I say: you are my heart, my soul, my life. I have no life, no soul, but you.'

"She smiled; a smile to make winter spring, and spring paradise. 'Believe me, Ahmed, my brother,' she said, 'what is in you, is in me twofold. If your love is strong, mine is stronger yet; you may know it one day.'

"'Ah, love,' I answered; 'your love needs no further proof. When I heard of how you had waited, of all you had suffered, my very heart was broken. I can never forgive myself for having been the cause—can you forgive me? A hundred times have I cursed my own selfishness for having even been content, been happy, a single moment while parted from you, and you in such grief.'

"She was evidently surprised, and asked what I meant. I then told her what I had heard the evening before from Rustoom Beg's man, about the Jinnee, and the rest. She saw that I had understood all, and was pained and confused that it should be so. She blushed crimson to her very neck, and covered her face with her hands. I sat silent before her, feeling guilty and distressed.

"Looking up at last, she said, 'I beg pardon of God. The true and noble-minded only ought to be entrusted with secrets. My secret, which I thought hid, has been disclosed; it is in your keeping, Aḥmed. Hide it anew with you, O my brother; let me not be ashamed before you.'

"She added no more; but I perceived her meaning. 'You are my sister, Zahra,' I said; 'your honour and the honour of your parents is mine also.'

"'I trust you; but, as you would ever see me again,' said she, earnestly, though tenderly, 'let no allusion to what you have just repeated ever pass your lips again; promise me, Aḥmed.'

"I promised; she grew calm again. One only sigh escaped her; she repressed a second. 'But now, my sister,' added I, 'tell me how you came to know all so exactly about my arrival; who gave you the news?'

"'You may thank your brother Moḥarib, the Riaḥee, for that. Aḥmed, you do not enough value that lad; he is worth a king's treasure to you.'

"She then went on to explain; the facts were as follows,—

"After my departure the year before, with my master the Pasha, none but the vaguest reports reached her for many months concerning those with whom I then was.

It had been a long and dreary period of blank for her as for me. Only the general news of the assassination at Bagdad had travelled up to Diar-Bekr; magnified as is the wont of such news. One account had placed me among the killed. She had steadily refused, said she, to believe it; yet knew not how to expect ever to see me again alive. Meanwhile, her father pressed her Bedouin cousin, the Emeer Daghfel's, suit, more determinately than ever; hoping in it to see the end of the preternatural influences to which he and others at large attributed the depression of spirits and loss of health under which she manifestly laboured. She, on her side, tacitly encouraged their belief in a delusion, which, while it misled, concealed.

"One morning early, a month since, she had gone into the garden, as she often did, to sit alone near the spot where we had bidden each other farewell, when an Arab girl in her service came softly up, and said in a low voice, 'Be happy in him who arrives.' Surprised, she asked the meaning; and learnt that the girl, having gone abroad at early dawn to fetch fresh water for the haram from a favourite spring half an hour distant, had there met one of her own clan; the description she gave of him identified Moharib. He had made many and minute inquiries of her regarding her mistress, and about the affairs of the family in general during the last year. He

had then, continued the girl, talked of other things ; but on parting had said, 'Meet me here again ; and meanwhile say to the Shekyh's daughter, "be happy in him who arrives."' "

" 'I understood without explanation who was meant,' continued Zahra', 'and that was enough. From that hour I lived again.'

" 'But the maid,' interposed I, not without anxiety.

" 'No fear about her,' she replied ; 'when she brought the message, she neither knew who was meant by it, nor much cared to know ; her whole mind,' with a light laugh, 'was taken up with her cousin whom she had just met.

" 'How often she and Moharib saw each other afterwards, I cannot tell ; but it was through this maid that I was informed of your having actually arrived here the day before yesterday ; and as I guessed whereabouts you would first think of looking for me—the heart often sees further than the eye, you know—I commissioned her to wait under the garden-wall, and, if you were near, to make the signal which I was sure you would recognise. By this, she must, I fancy, have a tolerably clear idea. But she is attached to me ; and her cousin has, no doubt, enjoined her secrecy ; and she will be faithful to a secret of the clan. The threat of death itself would not make a girl of Benoo-Riah betray.'

“‘And, sister, the doorkeeper?’ said I, ‘the old black? can he be trusted?’

“‘Oh! Jowhar,’ laughed she, ‘our host; he in whose room we now are. He is a Nubian, and faithful as Nubians always are; besides he has, after a fashion, had charge of me from a child; and my intercession has saved him I do not know how often from many a beating which his awkwardness would otherwise have earned him. The old man is devoted to me. Of course when I saw that this den of his was the only safe and manageable place for us, I could not avoid, while giving him his orders, to confide to him your name and all about you. But that need not dwell on your mind; be easy on his score. However, do not forget to be kind and liberal to him; he deserves it; and he may be very useful to you yet.

“‘As to the little negro,’ she added, ‘who brought you the message, he is, I suppose, a slave-child belonging to some one of Moḥarib’s own tribe, the Benoo-Riaḥ; he will tell no tales.

“‘But while my servant girl was hidden behind the garden wall, she overheard old Rustoom Beg say something about building a parapet to the kiosk. I was puzzled, and thought it best to send at once for your brother Moḥarib—a handsome youth he is too—however, you need not be jealous—and try to arrange a different plan for meeting.’

“Fain would I have asked her, while she related all these things, some question relative to her own thoughts and feelings ; but from this topic she had warned me already, nor did she ever approach it of her own accord. She seemed in her conversation wholly to have forgotten what concerned her, and to think only of me. What then needed I to seek ? Had she in the longest and most eloquent discourse laid bare to me her whole soul, that had borne less witness to her entire absolute love, than did this self-forgetful silence on everything else. I knew her mine—mine only.

“How happy I was—and, oh God, how wretched now!—in the look of her eye, in the presence of her smile, in the pressure of her hand, in the sound of her voice ; in the hour of which every moment assured me of what alone I valued upon earth, her love, I could not see beyond my own intense happiness.

“Yet between our talk I said some words expressive of my uneasiness lest any suspicion regarding us and our former interviews, any notion regarding the uses made of the kiosk and the garden, might have entered Rustoom Beg’s mind ; or, if not his, that of some of his attendants.

“‘How should it?’ answered she quickly ; ‘by what means ? That is most unlikely, impossible indeed : besides I am certain that nothing of the kind has got

abroad, or I should myself have heard about it long ago. Depend on it, my brother, the Beg's afternoon visit to the kiosk was a mere chance, and his remark on the position of the kiosk followed as a matter of course.'

"Her quiet courage gave me heart. I gladly put aside my fears—alas! too well founded though they were—and agreed in her view of the incident. Had I told her all? yet what would it have profited? So, changing discourse, I asked her whither led the door through which she had entered.

"'On a passage,' was her answer; 'and thence along some half-empty store-rooms, to a staircase; by which one has access to the haram. It is seldom used however; the maids rarely pass this way; and should any person happen to be coming, Jowhar, who is now waiting ensconced on the other side of the door, would give me timely notice.'

"We continued our conversation, now serious with the past, now gay and bright with the present, now hopeful with the future, till noon had long declined, and the 'Aşr, now as unwelcome as once it had been longed for, drew on. She rose to leave me; I rose too, scarcely knowing where I was, or what I did. As at our first meeting, she gave me her hand. I held and kissed it; then for an instant her head leant on my breast,—oh!

why do I remember all this!—then she drew her veil across her face, and turned to the door. ‘Zahra’, and when again?’ was all I could say. ‘Ahmed, brother, love! soon, if it please God—you shall know.’ With these words she drew her veil once more a little apart, and smiled: but her eyes were glistening with tears; mine were wholly dim. She was gone.

“A minute after old Jowhar re-entered the room, uglier by contrast, I thought, than ever, in spite of the friendly expression on his wrinkled face, which was as amiable as an eunuch could make it. Aware that those of his condition are apt to transfer to money the affection which men bestow on other objects, and mindful of the hint Zahra’ had given me, I had already a good-sized silver piece loose in the side-pocket of my jacket; this I put into the black hand, which closed on it eagerly enough. I should have liked to have talked a little with him, but he allowed me no time; over-prolongation of my stay might have been fully as dangerous to his neck as to mine. So with a ‘God be your guard, my white brother,’ he gently opened the outer door, and through it dismissed me.

“A deluge of sunshine poured on the road, and dazzled my eyes; my thoughts were even more dazzled, and my feet scarcely aware of the ground on which they trod. Mechanically I turned, and, without rightly knowing

what I was about, took a few steps in the direction by which I had come. Had I, in this bewilderment of ideas, fallen in with any of my comrades or town acquaintance, it is more than probable that I should have betrayed myself by gesture or word; a fortunate interruption prevented the danger. A pebble, thrown by some one behind, struck me sharply on the shoulder. Looking round I became aware that the thrower was no other than Moḥarib himself, who had taken this means of attracting my attention; he was standing at the further edge of a stony patch of ground opposite the ḥaram, close to the maize field, and now beckoned me to follow him. I did so. He went before me through the tall screen of maize till he reached the hollow of the water-course beyond, and descended into it; in silence I did the same, and we were soon seated together on a dry bank of rounded pebbles; the height of the bank above us, and its windings, concealed us from observation.

“Hardly giving time for the ordinary salutations, I seized his hand, and kissed it; I would have kissed his feet had he allowed me. ‘I have heard all,’ I said; ‘she has told me. O, my brother, how can I ever requite you for what you have done?’

“‘Do not thank me,’ he answered, ‘I have done nothing. But, Aḥmed Agha, you should not have gone

to the garden; you should have waited for me. Why did you break your word?’

“In truth I had no available excuse to offer, so I entreated his pardon. He laughed.

“‘Love is madness,’ said he; ‘I know it, and will not be one of those who censure a lover. But, brother, for God’s sake, be careful, now more than ever, or everything will go wrong.’

“I renewed my former promise: I would do nothing, attempt nothing, except at his advice and under his guidance. We then held long discussion, for each of us had much to say and to hear.

“To be brief: he told me that, under pretext of a change of pasturage, he had managed to bring some sheep belonging to the tribe up to this neighbourhood, where he had arrived almost immediately after myself; that the Sheykh’s daughter had sent for him the evening before, and had explained to him the difficulties of her actual position, now aggravated by those arising from Rustoom Beg’s orders regarding the kiosk. He had promised her, he added, to remain in or near Diar-Bekr till the Emeer Daghfel’s arrival, of which he made sure to have intelligence at least a week in advance; ‘then,’ said he, ‘we can best see what has to be done.’

“In return I explained to him more fully what I had seen or heard.’ ‘But, Moharib,’ I concluded, ‘tell me

one thing in simple truth. What has led you, almost a stranger as you were, thus to interest yourself in my behalf?’

“‘Nothing,’ he replied, ‘but that you are a true lover; and such a one deserves help from every other true lover. I have no other motive; your success is all I want now.’

“‘Since it is so,’ I rejoined, ‘you have by what you have said avowed yourself a lover also. Tell me, then, who it is that you love; whom I love you know.’

“‘She whom I love is far away,’ said he with a sigh. ‘For months we have not seen each other, nor shall till this summer be ended. But I will give you my story some other day, Ahmed. This is now your hour, and the hour of your good fortune; mine has not come yet. When it does I shall rely on you, as you at present on me.’

“Gladly I promised, and again we pledged our faith to stand by each other in life and to the death: a pledge destined, alas! to be kept better by him than by me.”

“You are, indeed a fortunate young fellow,” here interrupted Tanṭawee, “or you are a magician, in spite of your innocent looks. To have won the heart of a girl of Sheyban, and the brotherhood of a lad of Benoo-Riaḥ, is something that few can boast. Turks, Koordes,

Georgians, Albanians, and, so far as my experience of them goes, Europeans, are each well enough in their way; but what race of man can compare with the Arab in generosity of friendship, in warmth of love, in constancy above all? Nor do I say this because I am myself an Arab, and of the Arabs, but because, looking around me, I see that such is the truth, and truth is truth whoever says it."

"You are right," answered Hermann, "and I, a stranger by birth, have found among them all that you say, and more. In these respects they stand alone; none can compare with them. In war, in counsel, in poetry, in eloquence, in enterprise, in courtesy of manners, in beauty of life, as companions, as friends, as lovers, I have tried them in all, and found them wanting in none. My happiest days have been amongst them; and amongst them my happiest days will yet be, if God has any such in store for me."

"And next after the Arabs?" asked Tāntawee; "I am curious to know your opinion; you ought to be an impartial judge."

"You will think it strange," said Hermann; "but the race that I have found the most like the Arab in constancy of attachment, and the best sympathising, too, with Arabs in many other ways, is one very unlike in several respects, both of body and mind: I mean

the negro. Sometimes I fancy that the two must derive from a common origin; and yet again, the difference is too great for that. How could they ever have been one?"

"Certainly," laughed his friend, "if, like a good Muslim, you give credit to the pedigree drawn up by Hejaz chroniclers, and all their nonsense—do not make a wry face, it is nonsense, and you know that it is as well as I do—about Kahtan,¹ Abraham, Isma'eel, and the rest, you can indeed find no place for the negro in your genealogical tables. Nor do I myself well perceive how the dissimilarity in type and colour can be satisfactorily accounted for, even by difference of climate, or lapse of time. Still, if not a brotherhood it is a cousinship; though the common Adam of both must, I think, have been very far back on the list of the six thousand successive Adams and their descendants whom the Prophet—God's blessing on him for it!—had the good sense to admit before the extremely recent Adam and Eve of ordinary story."

"Be it so," replied Hermann; "I can only say that I have had a wide experience of both races, and have found

¹ Supposed by Mahometan annalists to be the same as the Joktan of Genesis, son of Heber, and to be the ancestor of the southern Arabs, as Ishmael of the northern.

both true, each in its own way. Nor—when among Arabs at least—have I ever regretted the absence of other men and women; certainly I did not then.”

“But now,” continued Tanṭawee; “have you now no longings to return to your German village—I have forgotten its name—and to the life of those there? or has it lost its charm for you? Does no image of the place, or of its people haunt you still? or have you given up every wish to be with them and of them again?”

Hermann was silent a minute or two, as though collecting his thoughts. “No,” at last he answered, “I have no such wish or longing now. While I was among them, I loved them dearly, God knows; but here in the East I have known truer love, freer breath, a manlier creed, and a wider scope; nor have I the heart to squeeze myself painfully again into the more regular and better polished, but narrower grooves of European life and thought. Besides, what should I do there now? I have learnt a different estimate of things; their interests would no longer be mine. European ways and manners, occupations and talk, would jar on me every hour of the day; and I should at last either wither under the self-imposed constraint, or break through into extravagances of word and deed injurious alike to myself and to those around me. No, Tanṭawee, as an Eastern and a Muslim I have passed the brightest days, the pleasantest years,

of my life ; as an Eastern and a Muslim I will drink what remains to me of the cup, though it be the dregs only."

Ṭanṭawee laughed again. "There spoke the boy ! Not thirty years old yet, and talking about the dregs of life ! Well, keep to your resolution, carry it out. Of all follies—and men's lives are at the most nothing more—it is perhaps the least foolish. Or rather," in a lower tone, "of all wisdoms—and there is a deep wisdom in every man's life, if not in the man himself—it is, I truly think, the wisest. Scarce one man in a thousand knows what is really his proper element, or what is not ; and if you are that one, as it seems by what you say, you are not only fortunate, but far-sighted.

"However, please remember that if human existence, as you hint, is short, summer nights are not very long, either ; and, unless some strange crisis intervenes, your tale is not yet, for what I can conjecture, near its end ; though hear it out I must and will, and this night, too. To-morrow, God knows how we may be occupied, both you and I."

"It was you who interrupted me yourself," said Hermann, and resumed his narrative.

"Before we parted it was agreed between us that Moḥarib should meet me the next day at a *kaḥwah* which I named in a back street of the town ; and should there bring me Zahra's message. He did so.

It appointed the same place and time for the morrow as the day before.

“And now began for me a period of happiness such as I had never known till then, nor have ever since. Though not daily—that could not be, owing to hindrances arising sometimes from her family and her occupations, sometimes from mine—my visits at the little door with the red mark, which, by the way, I took care to dull considerably, though not wholly to efface, were frequent; and the door of paradise never opened on keener joys. The veil was rent between us; her heart lay open to mine, and mine to her; without words we understood each the other’s very soul, yet used many words to realize to ourselves our own bliss, as a miser turns over and over in his open palms the treasure which he knew was his all the same while yet locked up in the strong box at his feet. She, however, unfailingly true to herself, never allowed the faintest approach to the familiarity that might, if permitted, have shaken the unsullied bloom from the tree of our happiness; and I, taught by her example, steadily repressed the passion which I felt, and by repressing increased it.

“Often, however, we could not but laugh together at the security we enjoyed amid the possibilities of discovery and danger on every hand; like those comfortably seated on a firm grass-grown ledge, with precipices all

around. Without, within the dwelling itself, where we met so easily, conversed so unreservedly, loved so ardently, were those to whom the slenderest hint of what was then passing in old Jowhar's chamber would have been the signal for amazement, dismay, fury, revenge, and blood. Now all was hushed and calm; if any suspicion had for a moment existed, it seemed to have again wholly died away. That I too, Hermann Wolff, a European, a stranger, should be here, Ahmed Agha, a Mahometan, a retainer of a Koordish Beg, unsurmised, undetected, in the haram of a Sheykh of Benoo-Sheyban, conversing with his only daughter, loved by her, pledged to her as she to me, seemed to me at times, and to her also, more a dream than a reality; till strangeness lent a new zest to enjoyment, and wonder to love.

"Often, too, did our talk turn on the future. She would never consent to wed the Emeer Daghfel: that was her firm, I had almost said her iron, resolve. That she would be mine and mine alone was, though implied rather than expressed in words, not less her certain will. But how? She would not, and I could not say. Mo-harib also, who best knew her plans, and had indeed suggested them, waited her order to speak, and in the meantime kept her counsel, eluding my every attempt to draw him into open discussion with persevering adroitness. At times, too, I was tortured by the necessary

briefness of our interviews, occasionally also by being obliged to prolong the intervals between them; but, present or absent, the assurance of her love and the nearness of my hopes sustained me. My treasure, if not yet wholly in my grasp, was not less surely mine.

“Three weeks passed thus, and no tidings had reached us of the approach of the hated Emeer—hated because undesired. But by the end of the first week my master, Ak-Arslan Beg, accompanied by thirty of his men, came in great state to fulfil his engagement at Diar-Bekr, and took up his quarters in the house of his kinsman, the bridegroom, Afsheen Beg. Henceforth my attendance and my services were frequently required; nor could I any longer live apart from the whole band of my fellow-horsemen, nor elude their observation in the manner that I had been able to use with the two stolid Koordes, my original associates. So I made the best of this state of affairs, went carefully through whatever my duties in the Beg’s household, or the customs of town-life, required; took my full share of visits, active pleasures, and amusements, even formed some fresh friendships; but made, as you may well imagine, no one the confidant of what was hour by hour the mainspring, the pulse, the very life of my being. Nor did this secrecy cost me the slightest effort. I was much too happy to care inwardly for any other intimacy than

one; wherever my body, and even my mind might be, my heart, or rather my heart of hearts, was always in one place, and with one alone. Only for her sake I loved, and have always since loved all little rooms, black eunuchs, and red marks on doors."

"Go on," said Tanṭawee. Hermann continued.

"Twenty days passed thus. Meanwhile the preparations for Afsheen Beg's ill-sorted marriage were nearly completed; and nothing delayed its celebration but the imagined necessity of waiting for a lucky day; the wise Arab admonition of 'Take no notice of the days, lest they take notice of you,' forming no part of the superstitious old Koorde's system of belief. However, unpropitious planets—or rather propitious ones, so far as I was concerned—could not always be in the ascendant; and I perceived with alarm that Ak-Arslan's stay, and consequently that of his men, mine among the rest, at Diar-Bekr, would not much overlast the nuptials.

"I communicated my anxieties to Zahra'. She asked how long it might probably be before the wedding. 'Ten days,' I answered, 'or fourteen at most.'

"'Have you any news of Moharib the Riaḥee?' was her next question. My answer was in the negative; for six days I had neither seen him nor heard anything about him. We both conjectured that his prolonged absence must be in some way connected with the Emeer

Daghfel's movements who—a new cause of disquiet—might now be expected almost any day.

“She listened to my words, seated, and looking straight before her, calm as ever, but saying nothing. I felt sure that her silence covered whatever I most longed or feared to know; but could not then comprehend the strength of her resolution, and what gave her whole manner the composure I was unable to rival even externally.

“‘Zahra’, my sister, speak,’ I urged. She remained silent. I cast myself at her feet, clasped them between my hands—and more by look and gesture than by words, implored her pity.

“‘Not thus, my brother Ahmed, not thus,’ she said; or is it that you doubt me?’

“‘Do I doubt you?’ was my answering exclamation: ‘Ah Zahra!’ can you think that of me? It is no doubt that troubles me; but this uncertainty is hard to bear. You know that when the Beg leaves Diar-Bekr, I must leave too; and meanwhile the Emeer—may God confound him!—will arrive; and what hope then remains to me of seeing you again?’

“‘A thousand Begs and a thousand Emeers shall not separate you and me, my dear brother.’ She raised her head as she spoke, and looked me straight in the face. ‘But you must have patience; the

time is not come; it——’ Suddenly she stopped, and a slight blush came over her features; her hand moved towards her veil.

“‘Let these things alone for the present,’ she added, regaining her former calm. There was a tone in her voice, which, while it re-assured, warned me.

“‘Are you displeased with me, sister?’ I said.

“‘No,’ she replied, ‘why should I be, Ahmed? But I fear your impetuosity; be cautious. Believe me, there is danger in the air.’

“I was about to ask her what her last words meant, but before I could frame my question, the door opened, and the black, Jowhar, whose fidelity I never had any reason to doubt, either then or afterwards, came hastily in. With a low voice he warned Zahra’ that such and such ones were about, and were likely to be soon coming that way; if she wished to retire unperceived, she must make haste. He then went out and reclosed the door.

“We parted abruptly. My heart was heavy, my temperament in an excitement bordering on irritation; her features, too, had no longer their wonted cheerfulness—they were fixed and sad.

“‘Not to-morrow, my brother,’ said she, as I proposed the next day for our meeting; ‘wait till I send. And, for God’s sake, be prudent,’ she added.

“‘I will be so, but do not let the time be too prolonged, sister, dearest Zahra’,’ I replied.

“‘Please God,’ she answered, with a faint smile. She left the room by one door, I by the other, each with a foreboding heaviness of heart, which, had we known more, would have been yet heavier. The sky, so bright of late, was now grey and overcast, its horizon was gloomier still ; eyes less keen than those of lovers might have seen that a storm was at hand.

“Slowly I bent my way back to the busy town and streets ; but before I had got well out of the gardens I noticed a figure, seemingly expectant of something or somebody ; it was standing a little way round the corner of a cross path, half visible in the dark shadow of the boughs that overhung the wall. As I approached, it moved, and turned partly towards me ; then abruptly retreated, and passed along into the side lane. I looked after it ; and by a small green tassel hanging down behind over the collar of the blue cloth jacket, more than by any other distinctive sign, I became aware that I had twice before observed the same figure, and each time while I was on my way to or from the Sheykh Asa’ad’s quarters ; and that then, too, it appeared to be, as it were, concerned with my own movements. Could it be a spy ? and if so, who was the employer ?

“More uneasy than before, I quickened my steps, and entering the town by a different gate from the usual one, made for a small *kahwah* in the northern quarter, where from time to time I had been accustomed to meet Moharib, in hopes of perhaps finding him now. No Moharib was there. This was the sixth day that I had seen nothing of him; formerly his intercourse had been the mainstay to steady my mind amid the successive fluctuations of events; now it failed me just when I most needed it.

“I returned to Afsheen Beg’s house, thinking there to find comparative rest of body and mind, for I felt strangely exhausted. But no; there, too, everything went against me. An unusual number of my fellow-horsemen were gathered together in the room that evening; and, as if on purpose to annoy me and increase my restlessness, their whole conversation turned on our approaching return to Jezeerah. I listened with disgust and impatience to the satisfaction that most—indeed, all except myself—expressed in the prospect of that event, and, in a fit of ill-timed perversity, took to contradicting them; I even went so far as to declare that I hated Jezeerah, and would make means to remain at Diar-Bekr.

“Maḵan Agha, who had remarked my ill-humour, and kindly tried to soothe or turn it off, stared in

astonishment. 'What is the matter with you, this evening, Ahmed Agha? Has any one been annoying you?' he asked.

"'Upon my word, I think that Ahmed is in love with some girl hereabouts,' remarked, in the merest random jest, one of my companions.

"But I started like a guilty man suddenly detected; and then, on looking round, perceived for the first time, seated in the room, not exactly with our group, but close by, between us and the door, the very figure that I had observed that afternoon in the lane. The sight deprived me of what little presence of mind I still had left; and I hurriedly began a perfectly unnecessary and uncalled-for explanation; in a word I exemplified the proverb, 'The fool went to the tank to wash, and dirtied his feet with the mud.'"

"That is an Indian saying, I think," interposed Tanjawee.

"Perhaps," replied Hermann; "but I learnt it in the sook at Bagdad." He then continued—

"Next day was a black one for me. New and gay dresses, bright ornaments, prancing horses, jovial companions, and ceaseless merry-makings and amusements on a preliminary scale, shortly to culminate in the conventional follies of the marriage itself, surrounded me on every side, and irritated me like the pricking of thorns.

“For my greater mishap, while I was thus inwardly smarting all over, my master, Ak-Arslan, summoned me to his presence. Now, though I had never dared with him to say openly how hateful to me was the thought of our return-journey, yet the sulky expression evident on my face whenever the subject was brought forward, and my general waywardness of manner and contradictory tone, had before now more than once surprised and displeased him, as well they might, considering the free and generous good-will he had shown me from the outset.

“On the present occasion he wanted to make some inquiries of me about our horses, in the view of their readiness for the road to Jezeerah next week.

“I went to the divan, but instead of answering his queries with the respectful alacrity of a favoured retainer, my behaviour was more uncertain and moody, and my replies more capricious and unsatisfactory than usual. His brow darkened, and he sharply dismissed me from the apartment. And no wonder; for though not unamiable at heart, he was sensitive and suspicious, quickly annoyed, and, when annoyed, not equally quickly appeased.

“I had soon bitter cause to repent my folly. Half an hour afterwards, while loitering in a most unenviable condition of mind near the door of the house, I saw a

respectably dressed band, evidently of attendants, surrounding an elderly man on a sober well-fed horse, come up the street and approach our lodging-place. I looked, and in the elderly man recognised Rustoom Beg, to whose garden I had, with unwise neglect, gone but once since my ill-starred visit; he alighted at the gate and entered. In his suite was the same *kaḥwahjee* whose eye had caught mine so unpleasantly when we were together on the kiosk-roof; and with him I saw a real cause of alarm, a man with a green tassel dangling down the back of his dark blue jacket. It was indeed the spy: who was, as I subsequently heard, a near relative of the *kaḥwahjee*'s, and who, my conscience told me, and told me true, had on this occasion accompanied the other, not by chance, but to corroborate and deepen his accusations.

“What was the precise nature of the conversation that passed upstairs between Rustoom and *Ak-Arslan Beg* I never knew; but it was a long one. I waited, unable to move, and tormented by the wildest fears, near the outer gate; till by the bustle within, visible through the *divan* windows, I became aware that the visitor had risen and was taking leave. Then mustering up my almost paralyzed strength, I betook myself elsewhere, to be out of the way of Rustoom Beg and his attendants.

“Hither and thither I wandered the remainder of the day, miserable and restless; sometimes looking, but in vain, for Moḥarib’s appearance; sometimes in vague longing I strayed, uselessly and injudiciously enough, towards the neighbourhood of Sheykh Asa’ad’s garden, and the lane by the red-marked door. At evening I returned, and summoning up a desperate courage, went and stood before the Beg my master. He made no fresh remark, but his face expressed what his words did not, or rather what his silence did. I felt for certain that I was, if not discovered, at least accused; and I knew that with a nature like his an accusation was, in nine cases out of ten, tantamount to condemnation. Besides, my own soul told me that in this instance he was only too much in the right.

“After a wretched night, in which the little sleep I got was tormented by hideous and presaging dreams, I rose early, and strolled out, vague and purposeless, toward the open ground on the east of the town. The morning was fresh, and the air pleasantly cool to my fevered hands and face. I welcomed it, and walked slowly on.

“When half-a-mile or so beyond the city-gates, I saw three horsemen coming towards me; two of them very unlike anything I was accustomed to meet in these northerly countries: lean dark figures, with strongly

marked features, scanty beards, long, black, and half-closed eyes; their fore-arms and legs were scorched almost black with exposure to air and sun. They were dressed in long dingy shirts; and over their shoulders hung brown cloaks, where the vestiges of red braid alone remained around the ragged edges; on their heads were handkerchiefs of a dusky red, girt by twisted camels'-hair bands of alternate white and black. Each of them grasped a long, narrow-headed, quivering spear in his hand, and, besides the knife in his belt, wore a slightly crooked sword. Alongside of these two wild-looking figures rode a third: it was Moḥarib, dressed much after the same fashion as his companions, and, like them, furnished with a spear. All three were mounted on lithe horses, beautifully formed, but lean, dusty, and jaded-seeming, as though from a journey of many days.

“At the moment they appeared, the sun rose golden bright over the blue ranges of Koordistan, and while it shone on the riders' backs dazzled full into my eyes; so that I did not recognise Moḥarib till he and the two others were close upon me. I was then about at once to have hailed him; but he, who had perceived me from a distance, was ready before he came up, with a glance and a gesture that repressed my salutation. So, taking no apparent notice, I walked on; much puzzled to think

who his companions were, and why he was with them. But when alongside of me, he raised his long spear for an instant, as though to ease his shoulder, and couched it across his horse with the point in the direction of a path further on before me, out of which they had themselves turned into the high road. I followed the hint, and went as he indicated, very curious to learn what it all meant.

"I was not long left in uncertainty. Before ten minutes had elapsed I heard a sound of galloping behind me, and Moharib came up. Hurriedly he greeted me; and, without awaiting my questions, informed me that the two Arabs I had seen were of Benoo-Sheyban, and the Emeer Daghfel's outriders; that the Emeer himself, with the main body of his men, would be here in seven days; that he himself had been all this while on the look-out for them, and had not been able to get back to Diar-Bekr sooner. All this he told me with Bedouin conciseness of words; and then asked how matters had gone during his absence—was there any appearance of suspicion abroad.

"Briefly as might be, I told him all. He listened attentively; but the habitual impassiveness of the Arab face permits no expression of the emotions of the moment. Without interruption or sign of surprise he heard me, till I had finished; then looked hard at me

and divined my thoughts, which were indeed of rushing off immediately to the haram and giving notice.

“‘For God’s sake, my little brother Ahmed,’ said he, ‘do not go there to-day; return to the town; remain with your comrades, and keep as quiet as you can. I will arrange everything.’

“‘When shall I see you again?’ said I.

“‘I will meet you in the town, before nightfall,’ he answered. And added, ‘Do not go out alone to-day, outside the walls or among the gardens.’ And, turning his horse’s head, he cantered off.

“Left to myself, I retraced my steps to Afsheen Beg’s house; but found hardly any one of our band there. My master, Ak-Arslan, had been invited for the day to the country-house and garden of a friend three or four miles out of town, and most of his Koordish suite had accompanied him; they would not return till nightfall. Whether or not my absence was remarked I did not hear then, nor had I subsequently any opportunity of finding out.

“Not knowing how to pass the time, I wandered up and down the market-place wearily enough, yet on the whole calmer somehow than I had been for several days past. While at the door of a mosque in one of the streets I met the same kahwahjee of Rustoom Beg’s whom I now looked upon, and with the best possible

reason, as my most dangerous enemy ; he came up, and greeted me with an affected frankness of manner to which I did my utmost to correspond. But when he advanced further to affectionate inquiries as to why my visits at the Beg his master's house had been so scarce of late, and even pushed his malice to talking about the alterations in the kiosk made in consequence of that too-memorable afternoon, I had great difficulty not to betray myself downright on the spot where we stood, by some fatal outburst. 'The pit is dug,' thought I, 'under my feet; better jump into it at once and have done than continue walking with useless caution on the rotten surface; sooner or later I must fall in.' However, I restrained myself, and preserved my outward calm; though I daresay the evident constraint of my manner betrayed me hardly less effectually than the most outrageous behaviour could have done. He then bade me farewell, and mixed with the crowd.

"Twice in the course of that day I came across Moharib, who seemed to be everywhere in the streets; but each time he gave me no mark of recognition. I therefore had nothing for it but to follow his example, and suppress my impatience, now almost past bearing. At last, just after sunset, he again appeared in sight, and this time evidently with tidings to communicate. They were brief, but important. Hardly allowing me

space to return his concise greeting, he said, 'I come from her, your sister; she salutes you.' Then pointing upwards to the moon, which now, a pale oval-shaped disc, hung high in the eastward heaven, for it was her tenth night, he added, 'When that is near setting, meet me in the lane, by the door.' And, without any other explanation, he passed on and left me.

"The hour he had implied was not much after midnight. I remained out in a *kaḥwah* of the quarter as late as I dared, in order to give the Beg my master and my comrades time to have returned from their merry-makings and settled themselves to rest; and then resought my customary night-lodgings in Afsheen Beg's hospitable dwelling. When I reached it all was quiet; every one had lain down long before. I too spread my carpet, and, throwing myself on it, feigned to sleep; for real sleep was of course out of the question for me under such circumstances. Several of us were lodged together in a large plastered room on the ground floor; and there I lay, wakeful enough, for four long hours, listening to my comrades, who were snoring beside me as only Koordes can snore after a heavy supper; every one of them had been for days past preparing by an introductory course of gormandizing for the anticipated delights of the wedding carousals.

"The night was warm, the air still; and the rays of

the declining moon shone almost as mellow as sunset beams through two small windows pierced in the side-wall of the apartment above our heads. Yet as I rose from my wakeful bed, I put on a cloak, not for protection against chill, but to hide the gleam of the arms which I carried about me; and to the service-condition of which I had given a careful look that evening before lying down. Then softly, softly, I left the room, and passed barefoot and on tiptoe under the vaulted entrance through the large outer gate: the servants, with a negligence not uncommon in a household where a weak good-natured old man is at the head, had left it unbolted. When fairly outside I put on my boots; and took the road I had so often trodden by day.

“No one was stirring on my way; no living form was to be seen; nor did I hear any sound except the occasional plashing of some small watercourse, and the wailing cry of the jackals prowling about the fields outside the walls: all else was still as death. The sinking moonlight cast a few long yellow streaks across the dust, but in most places dark shadow had overspread the road. On I went, like one half asleep, so overpowered was I by past anxiety, expectation, and the hushed night; till, at the corner of the lane, under Sheykh Asa’ad’s enclosure, I found Moḥarib in waiting.

With an 'all's well,' he bade me hail, and said, 'Go you there,' indicating a spot on the stone-strewn piece of ground by the path, already in deep shade, 'and wait without stirring.'

"I obeyed like a child, without reply.

"Seated on the ground I kept my eyes fixed on the wall of the *haram* opposite. The lower part of the building, along with the trees that clustered beside it, were now one mass of darkness; but the almost level light of the moon still caught on the upper storey, and brought out the roof in a distinct pale line against the deep pure sky, where the larger stars alone were visible. The moon herself, large and orange-coloured, seemed to rest awhile on the brow of a black hill, behind which she must soon disappear.

"I had not waited long when I heard a voice—it was *Moharib's*. Half ensconced behind the shelter of an earth-mound not far from the further or outermost corner of the *haram* buildings, he had turned his face towards them, and in a low, but very distinct, voice—almost too distinct, I thought, amid the intense stillness around—he thus sang :—

" ' Guide o'er the drear and desert ways,
Pass by the hills where foemen rove,
By heath and heather, banks and braes,
To greet the vale where dwells my love.

Bid her—yet bid her not—entreat
A thought, a memory of the past,
For one whose heaven was at her feet ;
His more than heaven, that would not last.'

"He paused; there was no answer, nor indication of any. Then he resumed, on a somewhat higher key—

"'Behind the sand-hills sinks the moon,
The lengthening shadows hurry on ;
Hid lies the vale,—but all too soon,
Both night and darkness will be gone.
Abide, abide, ye fleeting hours ;
What day denies let night restore.
Ours be the dell, the darkness ours ;
Thou, too, be mine, once more, once more !'

"Before the singer had half finished these verses, and just as the upper part of the moon's disc was about to vanish below the hill-top, I saw a female figure, draped in a robe of some dark colour from head to foot, emerge on the haram roof, and approach its foremost edge. My eye could scarcely distinguish the form ; but, quicker than my eye, my heart recognized Zahra'. She stood near the parapet for a short space, facing the direction where I was, and waited motionless till the song was over. She then lifted her hand, and pointed towards a distant spot ; I could perceive that Moħarib also had risen from his place, and made

some sign in answer—what, however, I could not make out for the shadow, which by this time had overspread everything. Immediately afterwards the figure left the roof.

“Moḥarib came up to where I was, and, taking me by the hand, led me in silence across the maize-field to the broken ground where he and I had before sat and conversed together in the torrent-bed. Once more we sat down on its pebbles; a deep revulsion of feeling came over me—my heart was like to burst. A faint sheen still glimmered over where the moon had set in the western sky; else the only light was that of the innumerable stars—some of them were reflected in the water at our feet. We waited both of us without speaking; had I tried, I could not have uttered a word.

“A few minutes passed thus; they could have been only a few, but I held no count of time, I had even no distinct thought; only it seemed to me that we were there spell-bound by some strange enchantment, that had begun I knew not how or when, and would hold us thus unbroken for how long I knew not either. At last I was aroused to life by a slight rustle coming through the maize; then followed a sound as of trodden pebbles, and two forms stood by us. Amid the half-transparent darkness of the summer night I recognized

in them Zahra' herself, and with her the Arab serving-maid, Moḥarib's kinswoman ; each was closely wrapped up in a long black veil that concealed every feature.

"Approaching, Zahra' saluted us ; I stretched out my hand in silence, for my voice was choked. We then—she and I—took our place side by side on the bank of stones ; Moḥarib and the maid remained standing near, till Zahra' bade them sit down, which they did. For some time no one spoke.

"Zahra' was the first to break the silence. In a low voice—'I have heard all this afternoon, Aḥmed,' said she, addressing herself to me. 'I was unwilling to speak sooner, but for some days I had feared the eye of the envious and the watcher ; that which I feared has indeed come to pass. But they shall not have their will—cheer up, my brother.'

"'How can I cheer up,' I exclaimed, 'when you are in danger ? my life ! my soul ! For me, enough if I die for your safety ; but what can be done ; Tell me at once, and I will do it ; but, O my sister ! do not keep me in suspense ; I am ready for everything.'

"'It is not my danger that matters ; it is yours,' she answered. 'For me, I am safe, at least for the present ; no one either within doors or without will dare to avow suspicion regarding me ; much less to embody their suspicions in act ; besides, the expected

arrival of my cousin the Emeer, if nothing else, will suffice to put all gossip to silence where I am concerned. But you, my poor brother!—they will not be so scrupulous about you; your life is every moment at the mercy of those who would think as little of taking it as they would of killing a quail or a partridge; it is for you I fear.'

" 'Let them try,' I replied. 'I have a right arm and a dagger; and these have been too much for the like of any enemies hereabouts before now.' As I spoke, I instinctively drew aside my cloak, and showed the weapons I wore.

"Gently she laid her hand on my shoulder. 'You are brave, my brother—I know it; were it a question of fair fighting I should be little alarmed about you. But what use would your courage be, or your dagger and pistols either, against a shot from behind the bush, a stab in the back, or a poisoned draught. Be wise, and listen to me; it is the only chance for your life, and for mine; for, Ahmed, if you die I will not survive you by one half-an-hour,' she added in an undertone.

" 'What would you have me do, dearest?' I asked; 'quit Diar-Bekr? No! that I cannot while you are here: and where should I go, leaving you behind? Ah Zahra! not that; tell me anything but separation from you, and I will obey, were it to walk through fire for your sake.'

“‘Softly, brother,’ she replied. ‘All I want of you is this; do not return, by night or by day, to this place or the house, nor even to this side of the town and gardens; do not even form a wish to see me again here in Diar-Bekr; it cannot be. Our next meeting will soon come, please God, but it must be far away from hence, in the south. When the Beg your master sets out to return to Jezeerah, go you along with him like the rest of his followers. On the second or third day of the journey Moharib will fall in with you; and he will show you where to go and how to find me.’

“‘And the Emeer Daghfel?’ I interposed.

“‘Never mind the Emeer Daghfel,’ she said, almost impatiently; then laughed. ‘I am more than a match,’ she continued, ‘for the Emeer my cousin, he and all the clan. Have not I promised you before? Only do you act as I now tell you, and everything, please God, will be well.’

“I promised to obey her directions in every respect; intoxicated by the hope her words gave me, by the tone of her voice, by the felt presence of her beauty, by the full draught of love avowed and answered, she might have dictated whatever she chose; had my heart’s blood been the price then and there, I should have consented. Yet I would fain have asked in return some fuller explanation of the when and the how of our next meeting;

but whether it was her own maidenly reserve, or whether she distrusted my prudence, I do not know—on this subject her lips were sealed.

“Then without a word more we read each other’s thoughts; and abandoning the anxious future and whatever could bring fear, disquiet, or pain, we turned our whole soul and converse for one hour—one last hour—to love and happiness, now in past remembrance, now in the fulness of the present. An hour of perfect life as of perfect love, an hour in which, though after long barren years, I yet live, she yet lives to me and loves; an hour of paradise; a last glad gleam before the darkness of the storm closed in around us.

“Of brightest hues the fading leaf;
The latest flower the sweetest;
The happiest hour is nearest grief,
The dearest joys the fleetest.”

“Suddenly a bright star leaped up over the eastern mountain-range; it was the star of morning. Zahra’ saw and shivered. ‘I never hated that star till now,’ she said; ‘may God forgive you and me.’ Moharib had risen—he and the maid had long since kept silence. ‘The time is short, the morning breaks.’ While he spoke the cool breeze smote us—enough—I will say no more of that moment; as I held her in my arms I

thought it the sweetest, as we loosed our embrace, the bitterest of my life. I was mistaken; there were bitterer yet in store.

"It was over now; she was gone; the uncertain gloom had taken her veiled form and that of her maid-servant into its depths: and a quarter of an hour later Moḥarib and I were slowly leaving the scene of all that joy, all that pain, under the grey twilight of the rapidly rising dawn. We made a wide circuit, going half round the town on a tract entirely unconnected with that by which I had come. As we walked, Moḥarib reiterated the advice already given me by Zahra', to be quiet and circumspect; and at the same time he endeavoured to quiet my apprehensions regarding the consequences of the Emeer Daghfel's arrival.

"'The sheykh's daughter is an Afreet,'¹ she will manage to have the nuptial celebrations put off under one pretext or another,' he said, 'till the caravan shall reach Nejd. Nejd is far away; the way thither is long; and you and I will cross their track before they pass the limits of Zobeyr.'²

¹ This word, denoting a powerful and cunning spirit, is often used by Arabs regarding a clever person with a complimentary signification, as here.

² A small town on the north Arab frontier, not far from Basrah.

“He then went on to give me minute directions regarding my own share in the accomplishment of the scheme. I was to bide my time in Diar-Bekr, keeping as much as possible within the walls of the town, neither shunning nor attracting observation; but carefully avoiding all solitary walks among the gardens or near the river, particularly in the neighbourhood which we had just left. ‘Remember, it is her honour, not your life only, that is at stake,’ he added. ‘As you value them both, attempt nothing further so long as you are in this place, come what may.

“‘When Ak-Arslan sets out for Jezeerah,’ he continued, ‘do you set out too along with him, like the rest of his suite. The second day, before sunset, I will cross your road, as if by accident, and at some distance. If then I say nothing, and seemingly take no notice of you or of any one else, understand that all goes well; if otherwise, I will find means of telling you. That same night, during the halt for rest, do you slip quietly away from among your companions, the earlier the better, and make your way, keeping between west and south, till you reach the village of Ra’s-el-’Eyn,¹ in the desert. There, if not sooner on the way to it, I will join you;—

¹ A small Arab hamlet, about thirty miles distant from Mardeen in the Mesopotamian plain.

the rest we will arrange afterwards. We shall have to fight, though, before all is done,' he added.

"My heart bounded with joy at the thought. To prove my love by deeds was the very thing I most longed for; had he told me that to reach the loved one I must pass a river broad as the Nile in autumn, and filled from brim to brim with fire instead of water, the prospect would have rendered me only the more eager to set out on my quest.

"But different things were in store; man contrives, and God ordains.¹ When we came under the city wall, near the narrow-arched gate on the north side, Moharib left me, with the promise of meeting me again in the course of the next day; while I, alone, but no longer downcast as before, continued my way over the rough pavement to Afsheen Beg's house. The sun was now up; everybody was stirring; and on entering the courtyard I found it full of life and bustle; some of the Koordes were grooming, others feeding their horses; others again talking and smoking between times. No one gave signs of having noticed my prolonged absence; in the holiday life we were then leading, each one, within certain limits, pursued his own occupations or pleasures much as he chose; and questions were seldom asked.

¹ Arab proverb.

Only Mağan Agha, who was leaving the place at the moment I came into it, met me with a serious expression, unusual on his merry face, and as he returned my morning greeting, whispered, 'Have a care.'

"Indoors several of my comrades were at work on a large bowl of clotted milk, into which small green cucumbers had been liberally sliced; seeing me approach, they widened their circle, and invited me to join in a share. I sat down in the offered gap, glad to still by a copious meal the craving emptiness that followed on the watching and over-excitement of the night, and began a good breakfast.

"Before, however, this task was well accomplished, a message came from my master, the Beg, summoning me to the divan. My heart—which had so lately almost recovered its calmer measure—now again beat rapidly. Could some spy, some traitor, have revealed the night's adventure? and was the crisis of my fate indeed come? It had come; though not precisely in the manner, nor with the immediate crash, that my fears anticipated.

"Doing violence to my suddenly diminished appetite, I finished, to the best of my ability, my share of the cooling meal; washed my hands and face, arranged my dress, and, with a mind disposed to meet and brave the worst, went upstairs to the square many-windowed room where Ak-Arslan awaited me. I found him at his ease

on the divan, in a loose morning dress, with one of his writers and a few acquaintances around him. His countenance was singularly open, his manner cheerful: it was, had I known it, the cheerfulness of the tiger when he sees his prey secure within the reach of his spring.

"Calling me to him, he threw down on the cushion beside him a large sealed letter. 'Take this, Ahmed Agha,' said he, 'and mount, without a moment's delay, for Mardeen. There you must give the letter to my uncle, Zenkee Agha, who lives in the castle; take his answer, and be back post-haste. Afsheen Beg's wedding—may good fortune attend it!—is fixed for Thursday, and you must be here again in time for it.'

"I picked up the letter, put it to my forehead, then into my breast, and was about to leave the room. He called after me,—'Ahmed.' I stopped. 'Mind,' said he, 'you deliver the letter to Zenkee Agha yourself; do not entrust it to any one else. Quickly, quickly: go, under God's guard.' 'On my head,'¹ I answered, and went out. In the hurry of the moment, and the excitement of unexpected escape, as I thought, from a danger anticipated as certain, I did not remark that he had neither assigned me a companion for the road, nor even

¹A customary form of speech, implying that he who receives the order is ready to vouch for its fulfilment with his life.

hinted at any ; but the idea occurred unpleasantly to me as I quickly descended the stairs with the letter in my keeping.

“ Yet after all, thought I, no occurrence could be more natural than this ; one or other of us was being continually employed on errands of this sort, and often alone. Ak-Arslan had many friends, allies of intrigue, and correspondences in the country all round, and was daily sending or receiving messages. Still, it struck me as a singular, and hardly an agreeable, coincidence, that I, who had for some time past been generally regarded as one of the Beg’s more personal and immediate attendants, and exempt from distant or courier work, should have it now abruptly thrust upon me ; and that precisely at such a time, under such circumstances. It might be only the result of his dissatisfaction at my late waywardness, and of the wish to have a discontented face less frequently in his sight. But it might also well be—I could not help saying to myself—a preconcerted design between my master and Rustoom Beg, perhaps the Sheykh Asa’ad also, to get me out of the way, or, indeed, to get rid of me altogether.

“ Anyhow, it would be well for me to be provided against emergencies. So, when once on the ground-floor pavement, I went round to an out-of-the-way place, appropriated by myself for the purpose on my arrival four

weeks since, before the dwelling became, as it now was, overcrowded, where stood the box, painted light green, and studded with brass nails, in which my valuables were locked up. I opened it; at top lay, neatly folded, clothes, shirts, handkerchiefs; underneath were my more costly possessions—a choice suit of arms, inlaid with gold, some ornaments, a bottle of scent, a sandal-wood string of beads from Mecca, and more jealously concealed than the rest, a girdle, in which sixty pieces of gold had been sewn up.

“Having well assured myself that no eye watched me, and screening my actions as well as I could behind a corner of the wall, for there was no door, I stripped myself, fastened the girdle tight over the skin round my waist, and then dressed again over it in my best and strongest clothes; put the beads in my pocket, and thrust my certificate of freedom¹ between my skull-cap and the new tarboosh² which I donned for the occasion. Then I secured in my belt, not the one pistol only that I ordinarily carried about me, but two taken from out of the chest, long-barrelled, primed, and loaded; besides a

¹ The “Azad-Kaghad,” given to a slave on obtaining his liberty; it is signed by his master, and countersigned by a magistrate and witnesses.

² The red cap, ordinarily surmounted by a blue tassel, common in the East; it is also often called “fez.”

heavy, brightly-furbished carbine, also loaded, which I slung over my shoulder, and a particularly long and sharp knife in my girdle. Cramming back my older and less valuable chattels into the chest, I relocked it, and issued forth into the courtyard to see after my horse.

“ ‘Why, what preparations you are making, Ahmed?’ remarked one of my fellow-horsemen,—a Yezeedee,¹ I believe. ‘How gaily you are got up!’

“I said something, not very coherent, about the wedding.

“ ‘That’s Thursday, and to-day is Monday,’ rejoined the other. ‘Why don’t you keep your fine clothes for the marriage day? Besides, the journey you are now for is hardly more than a good day’s ride.’

“The man’s ugly squint—he always squinted—had this morning something especially ominous in it; besides, thought I, how does he come to be already so well informed about my route and errand? I muttered an indistinct reply about the time of the year, and the loneliness of the road; then wished that I had said nothing, and passed on, with my suspicions now more awake than ever, to see after the condition of my riding-gear and my horse. Both were in excellent order.

¹ See Layard’s “Nineveh.” The Yezeedees are a remnant of the old Manichæan stock.

Tightening the girths, I leapt into the saddle, and, without a word of adieu to any one, rode out of the courtyard. Streets, market-place, and town-gates were soon behind me—I hardly noticed them as I passed—and in a few minutes more I had quitted Diar-Bekr, little thinking that I should never see it again.

“ Mounted on a powerful three-quarters blood-horse, which I had purchased ten days before with the spare proceeds of my master’s liberality, in the market of Diar-Bekr, fine in the muzzle, arched in the neck, light in the shoulder, long in the back, full in the loins and quarter, iron-grey in colour, with plenty of gold in my girdle, gay clothes, and serviceable weapons, Ak-Arsalan’s letter in my pocket, I should have seemed to any observer by the wayside a most unlikely person for sorrow or mishap. A bright sky above me, I passed rapidly on by house and inclosure, garden and orchard, familiar objects, to all which I was unconsciously bidding an absolute farewell, till I reached the plain.

“ I was now on the high-road between the summer-dried fields, with the thick dust beneath my horse’s hoofs, and the burning sun in his face and mine. By this time, I had lapsed into a strange dreamy state of mind, without distinct remembrance, idea, or plan; the events of the morning, of the night, of the preceding days, with all the scenes they had presented and the

emotions they had excited, seemed almost too distant for remembrance, or came before me flat, picture-like, and lifeless ; I tried to rouse myself and realize them, but could not. The surface of my thoughts, so agitated before into a thousand waves, now lay in an unnatural calm ; stilled as it were by the advance of a huge though unseen swell, that smoothed and absorbed into itself, while about to overwhelm and bury all. This was, indeed, no other than the unexplained presentiment of great misfortune near at hand, of a new and disastrous phase of life. I felt it to be such ; yet I could not shape the vague notion into form, nor assign its why and wherefore.

“I had ridden thus for an hour and more ; noon was drawing on ; and far or near hardly a soul was in sight. But as I was leaning half-drowsily over my saddle, I suddenly heard my own name called out. The voice sounded close to my ear, perfectly distinct, sharp and shrill ; it was different from any voice that I ever heard before, or, once alone excepted, since ; I pray God that I may never hear it again. Starting I looked around, before, behind. No one was near me on the road nor anywhere else within human call. I quieted myself, and tried to dismiss the circumstance from my mind, as merely the result of a sleepless night and an excited imagination, combined, perhaps, with the heat of the road. Then, on the far

edge of the visible horizon, two miles or so distant on my right, I discerned three mounted figures that appeared to be coming round from a wide circuit, and hastening on in the same direction with myself, as though intending to outstrip me. Soon afterwards a rising ground hid them from my view, and they did not again appear.

"There were troubles in the country at large; the regular government was relaxed, or, rather, existed only in name; every man was law or un-law for himself. Several of the innumerable petty chieftains who divide Koordistan were at feud with each other; and every day cattle and sheep were being carried off, now by Beg this, now by Agha that; now and then a man was shot, or though more rarely, stabbed.

"I was aware of this, and had it partly in view when I armed myself for my solitary ride; thinking that, even treachery and assassination apart, I might not improbably fall in with troublesome customers, whose violence would be best prevented, or if not, requited by a good provision of powder and steel. Hence I was not wholly taken by surprise by what happened that afternoon shortly after I had entered the long-winding valley through which the road runs south-east from Diar-Bekr.

"The path I followed led alongside of a little ravine, or, better, an abrupt depression, filled up with willow, alder, and brushwood; on the other hand, that is the

right, the rock hemmed me in. The ground was rough and stony, and I had allowed my horse to go leisurely, picking his way among its inequalities, when all at once, without sign or warning, two shots were fired at me almost point-blank out of the brushwood : one grazed my arm ; the other went altogether wide. Near as the aim was, I cannot up to the present day imagine how the bullets missed my body. The reports echoed wide and loud ; but through them I clearly distinguished a third sound also—that of a trigger snapped, and a flash in the pan.

“Without waiting to think of numbers or danger, I turned my startled horse’s head towards the thick leafage from which the light-blue smoke was still curling up, intending to discover who my cowardly assailants were, and to punish their attempt. The long-endured strain of anxiety and passion had aroused in me a reckless ferocity ready to break forth on occasion given ; though of this I was not myself yet fully aware. What next might have happened I cannot tell : little good to me most likely, the odds considered. But my time was not yet come ; for at that instant an armed band of travellers, men of Moşool by their dress, appeared winding up the valley towards us ; they had heard the noise of firearms, and shouted out loudly to me when they saw me. This incident probably saved my life ; for the would-be assassins, alarmed at this unlooked-for reinforcement, hid

themselves deep in the ravine, and, doubtless waited a fitter opportunity.

“That which had at first been mere suspicion now became for me absolute certainty; a plot had been laid to get me alone out of Diar-Bekr, and then to murder me on the road. More I could not then give myself time to examine or conjecture; the first thing to be done, and done without the loss of a moment, was to change my route and so baffle the liers-in-wait, whoever they were. So, hardly waiting till the Moşool band, after brief interchange of inquiry and greeting, had passed on, I turned sharp out of the regular high-road into a side-track that led off amid a labyrinth of wooded hills, broken here and there into little rocky ledges on the right. Among these I threaded narrow thicket-girded paths, pushing my way with difficulty through thwarting branch and bough, now climbing, now descending, by countless slopes and valleys, each puzzling like the preceding one, till I was sure that I must have put a long distance between the high-road and myself, and had moreover entirely lost my way.”

“Had I been you, I should not have been over-anxious to find it again,” interrupted Tanṭawee. “What, in God’s name, could have possessed you to want to go on for Mardeen after all that had happened? Did you wish to give your kind friends the chance of another shot?”

or was all the world for you in the Karajah Dagħ and the Tigris valley, that you must needs remain within their limits to be murdered at leisure?"

"True" answered Hermann; "and now that it is long over, and I am sitting here quietly on the ship's deck, I can myself see clearly what I ought then to have done. But I had been for a good while in the service of Ak-Arslan, and, though I could not otherwise than suspect him of a hand in the ambush laid for me, I had it not yet in me to renounce his bidding. Zahra' too was still in Diar-Bekr: and how so suddenly put an absolute severance between me and the place that held her? Ties continue to fetter, even when every strand that wove them has been broken across; and I was young, and a stranger; and many strands, ay, Tan̄awee, and the strongest of them all, yet bound me. Like a sheep to the slaughter I went on, head downwards, with two only thoughts for guides; one to reach Mardeen, deliver my message, and return to Diar-Bekr with all possible speed; the other to avoid the high-roads and ordinary paths of the journey."

"In a word, you had lost your head," subjoined his friend. "Well; much allowance must be made for a lover; but pray act more discreetly in our coming campaign, or it will go hard with your men and you. But continue your story."

Hermann resumed.

"While I wandered thus, uncertain of the very points of the compass, I met a peasant carrying a faggot of wood; on seeing me, armed and fierce-looking, he turned in fright, and began running away. I called to him, reassured him, and when he had recovered his wits enough to understand me, asked him my way to the nearest village in the direction of Mardeen. He pointed out to me a bridle-path leading to a large hamlet, Beydar he called it, where, said he, I could find food and forage for myself and my horse, and lodging for the night. The place itself was three hours' distance from where I then was.

"Pressing forward in the direction he indicated, I reached the low flat-roofed dwellings and mud walls of Beydar a little after sunset. In the village there resided an Agha, 'Omar by name, a Koorde, of course. He was a native of the locality, and proprietor of the lands around it. His large, straggling house, with its patchy plaster, numerous windows, and wide open entrance, attracted my notice. Without ceremony I rode into the dirty court, half-full of cattle driven in for the evening, and dismounted.

"The Agha received me hospitably; he was a youngish man, thick-set and red-faced. This latter quality was, I soon discovered, due in great measure to the

freedom with which he habitually indulged in spirituous liquors, more especially rāķee. Not that he was wholly singular in this respect, for all the inhabitants of these parts, Mahometans scarcely less than unbelievers, are given to strong drink ; the Koordes more than any. Few in fact abstain wholly, though the great number keep, at ordinary times at least, from gross excess. But within 'Omar Agha's walls, it was like master like man. Every one, friends, acquaintance, retainers, servants, slaves, were habitual drunkards. Bottles stood on the shelves, and glasses were filled and emptied, from morning till night. It was the rule of the place, and who did not like it might go elsewhere. On drunkenness followed its ordinary consequences ; and a Bagdadee Belillah¹ himself might have been startled and disgusted by the debauchery that reigned in talk and deed too throughout the establishment. I myself, though not over-scrupulous on many points,"—"I rather think not," interjected Tanṭawee—"was so here ; besides, I was just then in no humour for amusements of that kind.

"However all made me welcome ; few questions were asked of my coming and going ; it was 'Hail, fellow ; well met ;' and, 'let us enjoy the hour.' There was no lack of good fare ; meat was plenty, and drink more so ;

¹ A "ne'er-do-well," or "son of Belial."

and the boisterous gaiety of the Agha's men seemed to be only increased by the anxious expression which they observed on my face, and wished to dispel. A couple of bottles of coarse but fiery rakee were speedily disposed of by the party; more followed. I, harassed by my thoughts, excited by the noise around me, determined to be merry also for an hour or two at any price. I took my share largely. The liquor acted even more than it would otherwise have done on my worn brain and wearied frame; and I soon succeeded in becoming to the full as noisy as the rest, only less good-humoured.

“The night in these regions, for the village stood high up among the mountains, was cool in spite of summer; we lighted a fire, and sat round it drinking for more than an hour. Of a sudden a quarrel arose between myself and a young Koorde, one of 'Omar Agha's retainers, of about my own age; the beginning of it was a coarse joke of his, ill-taken on my part. This led to high words and angry gestures; followed by knives drawn on either side, thrusts and slashes. My new dress was cut and torn in more than one place; but my antagonist got the worst of it, for a blow of my khanjar¹ laid his smooth cheek open from temple to jaw, and covered him with blood.

¹ Dagger.

“Fortunately the soberer ones of the party interfered, otherwise it would have fared ill with me ; for three tall grizzly-bearded Koordes had already unsheathed their knives and rushed on me in a body to avenge the fate of their relative, who, thrown backward by the force of my blow across the bench where we had been seated, now lay stunned and bleeding on the floor. But with those who were the least drunk, or who had no kinsmanly interest in the fray, the titles of stranger and guest had not wholly lost their value even by this provocation ; and more gathered to my defence than to my attack. When the first hubbub was over, we picked up the wounded man, and washed the blood from his head and face ; the cold water soon brought him to himself. His comrades bandaged up the cut, which, however unsightly, was not deep or dangerous. I was heartily sorry for what I had done, and made many excuses, which were seemingly well received, not only by the young fellow himself, but even by his more surly relations. After a few minutes nothing more was said on the matter ; but the conviviality of the night was at an end, and before long we were all laid down, I with the others, to sleep.”

“Did the Agha know of the affair ?” asked Tāntāwee.

“At the time he certainly did not,” answered Hermann, “for he had gone out early in the evening to another house, where he had an appointment ; but he must have

heard enough of it later on, considering the consequences."

"And what were they?"

"Bad ones; you shall hear," said Hermann; and continued,—

"After a short and sound sleep, I rose next morning early, and was in the saddle by sunrise, intending to reach Mardeen, which was still several hours distant, about noon. The path pointed out to me by the villagers, led downwards for some miles, gradually descending among rock, hill, and wood, till it emerged, according to their account, on the great plain west of Mardeen, in view of the town and fortress.

"However, long before I had got clear of the broken forest-covered ground, indeed when I could not have made more than three or four miles' distance from my resting-place of the night, two Koordes, foster-brothers of the young man whom I had wounded, started abruptly from behind a clump of brushwood alongside of the way. One of them, leaping up at me, attempted to drag me off my horse, while the other cut furiously at me with a sword. But I was well armed—much better than my assailants; and though after the peace-makings of the evening before I had not anticipated this ambushade in particular, I was so far prepared against similar occurrences, that I was not taken wholly by surprise. Before

the swordsman had found time to deal me an effectual blow with his clumsy weapon, I had drawn a pistol from my belt, and twisting round, shot through the body the fellow who was grappling me. He dropped groaning; the other turned and fled.

“The sight of the dying man; his look of despairing rage at me as he lay there convulsed on the grass; the short stifled gasp that, parting, left his features fixed in the changeless distortion of death; the dark blood trickling out to a distance from under heather and thyme; the consciousness that I had with my own hand killed a man with whom I had been, not twelve hours before, seated at the same table, eating out of the same dish, drinking out of the same glass; the certainty too that I had by the act incurred the blood-revenge of a whole family and clan at arms—all these worked on me in an overpowering manner, and utterly unnerved me. I felt myself guilty—though, in truth, I was not so except in part—of the first quarrel which had brought on the whole affair; guilty also of the death, which, rightly considered, I had only caused in fair self-defence; guilty of whatever I was, and whatever I was not. Besides the waywardness, the impatience, the ill-humour, the over-excitement, the whole element in which I had been living and indulging myself for so many days past had, instead of strengthening, really weakened my character, by the

unhealthy stimulus which they at first conferred. They were now gone, and in a moment the entire reaction came over me.

"I dismounted ; stooped down by the body, took it by one arm, lifted it a little, let it fall back again. All was of no use : life had left it. Hastily then I tore down some handfuls of leaves and twigs, and covered the corpse ; but my bitter self-reproach would not be covered from me. I knew myself to be, in the eyes of all, near or far, a convicted criminal, both for what I had done and what I had not done. To return to Diar-Bekr, and there face my master, my comrades, my acquaintance, Moḥarib, Zahra' herself, now seemed to me an impossible thing. A curse was on me ; fly I must ; and my flight instinctively—for till the first glimpse of the open plain a full hour later aroused me to such considerations, I made no account of the why and wherefore—took the direction of Mardeen.

"It was a dreary ride, full of anxiety and remorse, full of the worst misgivings, the apprehension of countless evils and dangers, some real, some imaginary, but figured as real ; and myself accountable for all. A corpse in the grass, a broken heart in the dwelling, anger, shame, hatred, confusion, filled up my backward view ; before, everything was doubtful, perilous, and dark. Now, too, returned to my memory the happiness known so lately

at Diar-Bekr : that garden, that room, that torrent bed, those meetings, those looks, those words, the warmth of her hand in mine, the touch of her cheek ; but all wore a different aspect, all was gloom and wormwood to my soul. I condemned myself for a seducer and a villain ; yet had any one questioned me in what I was a villain or a seducer, I should have been at a loss for a reasonable answer. The sky was one leaden cloud-vault above ; there was no star to guide or cheer me in sight.

“But worst of all to bear was the thought of the barrier that my own acts, for mine they were, had raised between my love and myself ; a barrier over which I could then see no passing. I saw her—how near yet how far !—bravely keeping her own against parents, friends, relatives, suitor ; hemmed in on every side by difficulties, pressed by every motive of affection, modesty, fear, by persuasion, by threats, by authority, by force perhaps ; and amid these faithful to her given word, and waiting night after night, day after day, waiting vainly for my re-appearance, and the fulfilment of my plighted promise—in vain, in vain ! This thought was torment indeed ; hell, did hell exist, could have no worse ; for in the imagined hell of story there would be no love, and love has cunning torments unknown to any but himself in any world. And thus they tortured me :—

“ I think of those I left behind,
Not those I see before me ;
A sudden pang contracts my mind,
A shadow darkens o'er me.
Of love unquited, left to wait
Far off, a chance returning ;
Drear road, and shadow-haunted gate,
And hopeless hopes of yearning.

“ This have I found life's saddest curse,
That love is still unequal,
To take the better, give the worse,
With sundrance in the sequel.
And poise the scales, as poise we try,
The balance will not even ;—
Oh, hangs it ever more awry,
Or comes it straight in heaven ? ”

Having recited these verses, Hermann covered his face with his hand, and remained silent.

“ A pitiable case yours was indeed,” observed Tan-tawee ; “ but, honestly, I cannot call it quite undeserved. You were, to speak the plain truth, only reaping what you yourself had sown. My dear Ahmed, intrigues like those which you had then been pursuing with such intemperate eagerness—excuse me, but I am only using your own words—could hardly have a different result ; and, boy though you were, you knew, or ought to have known, that you and she too were playing with edge-tools of a particularly dangerous description. At best

you were wasting time and energy that might have been more usefully employed, besides putting your own hands, and those of your fellow-players, in imminent risk of very ugly cuts."

Hermann said nothing ; Tanṭawee went on.

"What right, again, had you, Ahmed, to step in between a girl and her family, a betrothed girl too, and you a stranger and a dependant on others ; and to encourage her in meetings and schemes which placed her every moment on the brink of dishonour, or worse ? She, indeed, seems to me to have been, if not better principled, at any rate wiser than you, and to have known where to stop, or rather to make you stop. I honour her for it. But as for you, you were simply a young pleasure-hunting scamp, determined on the gratification of your fancies, lawful or unlawful, with all their consequences ; likely enough anyhow to be worse for her than for you."

"You are too hard on us both," at last answered Hermann, roused, as his friend had intended he should be, into self-defence. "Neither father nor family have, in my opinion, a right absolutely to dictate a girl's marriage choice, independent of her will ; and a betrothal, however formal, if made without consent, may assuredly be broken off without wrong. And as for the lawfulness of love such as ours, I hold that what God Himself causes

cannot be unlawful. She was free, and so was I; God willed it, and we loved. In very truth, and on whatever supposition you take it, neither my love nor hers deserves blame, unless it be for the rashness of bringing ourselves within the compass of penalties which, like the laws that imposed them, might in cases like ours command fear, but never obligation or respect.

"However, if you will know our thoughts, neither she nor I troubled ourselves much about these things; we took the present as we found it; and made of what seemed to us actual security, and of the intensity of our own love and hope, guarantees for the future.

"Yet," added he, in a lower and a sadder tone, "I was wrong; but on her account, not mine. For the perils which I exposed her to, I was wrong. I saw it from the outset, or nearly so, though indistinctly. I spoke of it to her; but her own constant habit of undervaluing whatever was personal to herself, led me, after a fashion, to undervalue it also; and when matters grew worse, instead of opening my eyes, I closed them altogether. She loved too well, and I not wisely."

"Well; I admit your excuse in part at least," answered Tāntāwee. "But you and she, had you no definite plans for the future? no pre-arranged purpose to obviate the difficulties that she, if not you, must have foreseen?"

"She had hers," replied Hermann; "plans definite

enough, as I learned afterwards, and perfectly feasible. That they did not finally succeed, the blame was not on her, nor exactly on me either."

"An Arab girl's projects would hardly be other than reasonable," subjoined his friend; "and hers, I make no doubt, were such. But yours? I wonder what yours were, Ahmed; nothing very practical, I suspect. Something in the romance style, a running away—a rescue—eh, Ahmed? Or was a Jinnee from among the Jann¹ to come to your aid, as in the stories?"

"Not quite so unreasonable as you choose to suppose," replied the other; "and, had not destiny been against us, they might have readily succeeded. But there is no use in canvassing them now."

"Why so?" asked the Egyptian.

"Because I do not choose," was Hermann's answer. "What is the good of discussing the 'would' and the 'might'? Enough; I will tell you what followed." Then he resumed his tale.

"I rode on, gloomy and purposeless, till the glare of the hot plain below striking up in my face at the last descent, warned me that it was time for me to come to some resolution in view of my own personal safety. So, dismounting, I led my horse a little off the path, tied him

¹ Plural of the former word.

to a dwarf oak in a dankish hollow, and sat down close by to eat a piece of bread which I had put into my pocket that morning before leaving 'Omar Agha's house, and to think collectedly what was next to be done.

"My mind was soon made up. I would go to Mardeen, and there deliver the letter with which I was charged. That was, I imagined, a duty I owed to my master, whom somehow I could not even yet bring myself to believe a party to the plot laid for my assassination."

"He must have been, though," interposed Tantawee.

"Possibly," answered Hermann, "but of that I had not any decisive proof. Besides, I thought that my appearance on Ak-Arslan's business in Mardeen, when it came to be known and commented on afterwards, as it could not fail to be, would act as a sort of screen interposed between myself and my subsequent movements. Yet my stay at Mardeen must not be a long one; the letter I carried might, for aught I knew, contain matter of danger for me; nor were the kinsmen of him whom I had slain that morning likely to be long in tracking and finding me out. So I determined that I would get the letter put into Zenkee Agha's hands by some friend in the town; secure meanwhile a good feed for myself and my horse, and, if convenient, some provision for the way; and then make off at the shortest possible notice for Ra's-el-'Eyn, the meeting-place appointed by

Moharib. There, I thought, I can best lie concealed till further tidings."

"Not a bad idea," remarked Tantawee, "in every point but one—the same that I mentioned before. You should have gone to Ra's-el-'Eyn straight off at once; your presenting yourself even for an hour at Mardeen was, to say the least of it, superfluous."

"It was so," replied Hermann; "but in the confusion of my ideas it seemed to me a necessity. There was also at the bottom of it a lingering, a most idle, hope of discovering even yet some means for returning to Diar-Bekr; or perhaps it was mere dread that delayed me from taking the plunge into the vague distance."

After a brief pause, he continued.

"Noon—one of the sultriest noons I ever felt—was still at its height when I reached Mardeen, and wound my way slowly up the giant hill towards the fortress, within the ruinous circuit of which stood the house of him to whom the letter I bore with me was addressed—Zenkee Agha. I felt the paper in my breast—it gave my hand the sensation somehow of a dagger's point. 'Another, not I, shall deliver you,' I said. Then stealthily, guiltily, I slunk into the city, feeling as if everybody's eyes were upon me, and thought myself fortunate indeed when I arrived, saluted by no one, recognised by no one, claimed by no one—ah! how

unlike the Ahmed Agha of a few days back,—at a friendly door. It was the door of Molla 'Abd-er-Rahman Effendee, one with whom I had made acquaintance, and who had treated me kindly when I had formerly come this way.

“The house stood in a by-street, little frequented at any time: more silent than ever in the dead heat of the hour. But a handsome lad of about twelve years old, and a little girl of six or seven, in a light pink dress—the molla's children—were playing in the shade by the entrance; they recognised me at once; their father, said they, was asleep in the haram. ‘Do us the honour,’ added the boy; I dismounted, and gave him my horse to hold. He passed the rein to his sister, who held it timidly, while her brother ran, and opened for me the door of the guest-room. Wearily I entered it, and sat down on the spotlessly clean divan; the boy left me, and resumed charge of my horse, which he led round to a shed near the gate, and there took care of. The little girl ran off to the haram, where, I suppose, she gave notice; for a few minutes later the master of the house came in.

“Our greeting was cordial. However, I was obliged to use some reserve in answering his inquiries regarding the errand that had brought me to Mardeen; this done we remained half-an-hour or so in general conversation. At the end of that time, a young white-turbaned student,

pupil of the molla's and who acted as his servant on occasions like this, came in, bearing with him on a carefully-burnished copper tray a noon-day meal, prepared in haste; for I had told 'Abd-er-Rahman that my business was of an urgent nature. Harassed and exhausted as I was, I had really much more need of food than of talk; yet, when the eatables were placed before me, I could ill avail myself of them; excess of fatigue, mental and bodily, had taken away from me all appetite, and even the power of feigning one. I trifled with some slices of a ready-cut melon, called again and again for water, and drank of it largely.

"The molla, a bright, cheery, neatly-apparelled, middle-aged man—himself a model of quiet and orderly health—looked anxiously at me. 'What is the matter with you, Agha?' said he; 'are you ill? You were pale and jaded enough when you first came in, but now you seem paler and worse than ever. Eat in God's name; it will do you good—try.'

"'My worthy friend,' thought I, 'had you on your mind the half only of what I have on mine, you would be paler, perhaps, than I.' Then aloud I said something about the extraordinary heat of the day, the length of the journey that I had come, and so forth. 'But now,' I concluded, though without rising from my place, 'I must go and deliver the letter to Zenkee Agha.'

“‘Let the boy Hamid take it for you,’ said my host, making precisely the proposition I trusted he would, ‘and do meanwhile lie down here on the divan and take a nap; at sunset you can go to the house yourself, and receive the Agha’s answer if he has one to make. Hamid,’ continued he, calling his son, and throwing down the sealed paper on the mat before him as the boy entered, ‘take that to the house of Zenkee Agha; you know where it is—up there in the castle, left of the big entrance-gap.’ The boy, who, luckily for me, did not in the least know the house, but, from respect for his father, abstained from saying so, picked the letter up, and left the room.

“‘Now do you lie down,’ continued the molla, while he arranged the cushions comfortably for me on the low divan. I took off my jacket, loosened my girdle, and stretched myself out. My friend next brought a light cotton covering, and threw it over me, saying, ‘In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate; God’s blessings on the Prophet; say, “He is one God,”¹ and rest secure; I will come and wake you up before sunset.’ He then went out, gently closing the door after him.

“I, for my part, had not the least intention of waiting his return or sunset either; all I meant was to take an

¹ The first verse of a well-known chapter of the Koran, often recited before going to sleep.

hour's repose at the very most, and then to slip away unperceived; by that time my horse would, I calculated, have eaten his barley, and I myself should have regained strength enough for the way. But hardly was I alone than a weight seemed to press on every limb, my ideas became confused, the walls, the windows, the shelves, the objects ranged on them, wavered before me; my eyelids felt as though some one's fingers were closing them, in spite of my efforts to keep them open; a minute more, and I was fast asleep.

"With a violent start I woke—something had, I thought, struck me over the back of the hand. Frightened, I raised my head from the cushion, and looked in that direction; even as I was looking I felt, it seemed, the blow repeated, sharp and hard. I jumped right up; no one was by. The neat little room, with its whitened walls, and clean straw matting, the sentences of the *Koran*, and framed specimens of Arab caligraphy hung here and there; the water-jar and glasses on the shelves in the niche; the long pipes and the shining brass ash-trays, were all there, precisely as I had seen them when I first lay down. Only the sunshine which had then fallen through a little square window bright on the mid-floor, now rested, dull and ruddy, half-way up the wall opposite; the 'Aṣr must have passed during my sleep; sunset could not be very far off.

The window looked into the main street on the other side of the house. In that street I now heard steps and voices, as of men going by. Standing up on the divan I peeped through the lattice; and outside I saw—yes, there was no question, I saw—six villagers, amongst whom I quickly recognised three of my boon-companions of the night before, all armed to the teeth, country-fashion, and with faces and gait that plainly announced evil intentions—to whom I had no need to ask. They went tramping along up the steep ascent towards the castle gate; and several townsmen, engaged in animated conversation, were accompanying them thither.

No time was to be lost; the avengers of blood were already within the city-walls; the avengers of family honour and of the sanctity of the haram might not be far off behind. Cursing my own folly for sleeping with my neck in so deadly a noose, indeed for putting it there at all, I waited perforce an instant till the street was still, reclothed myself in haste, and then, opening the door more gently even than the molla had closed it, quitted the apartment. Straight I went to the shed where my horse stood, tied by a halter; his reins hung close by; the saddle had not been removed from his back. Poor beast!—he neighed, much to my annoyance, on seeing me. I stroked and unfastened him, and then, throwing the reins over my arm, led him out by the halter-rope, as if I was

taking him to water. I never saw my friend 'Abd-er-Rahman nor any of his household again.

"My best hope was now to get away unnoticed to the outer town-gate, and then to mount and ride for it ; but this was not an easy thing to do, now that the approaching evening had filled the streets with busy or loitering inhabitants. In fact as I turned a corner, with my horse following me, I came right on half-a-dozen of my old Mardeen acquaintances, men of my own condition in life, sitting on wicker stools in front of a large *kaḥwah*, chatting and smoking. When they saw me they hailed me with a simultaneous welcome. To avoid suspicion I acknowledged it, and led my horse near the circle.

" ' Whence come ? and whither away ? ' was asked by all. My answer was ready : I had brought a letter—to say thus much truth cannot hurt, thought I—from my master, Aḳ-Arslan Beg, to an Agha in the town ; had received—this was certainly untrue—the answer ; and was now away back for Diar-Bekr. I added that my duty required speed. This very night, I must, so ran my orders, reach the village of Sheykhān, a long twenty miles distant on the return road ; hence, I must, for want of time decline the coffee and nargheelah which their friendliness pressed upon me, or I should be too late on the road.

" A few moments of polite expostulation on their part

followed my announcement. Seeing that I would not be persuaded, 'Boy,' called out one of them to an attendant youngster loitering at the door of the *kaḥwah*, 'go to such and such a *khan*, and fetch my horse, along with that of 'Alee the Seroojee—or stay, I will go myself.' Then, addressing himself to me, 'Aḥmed Agha, wait here till I return,' he said; 'I will be back again in an instant; 'Alee and I will mount and accompany you a bit of the way. Never mind about watering your horse here in the town; we shall cross the mill-stream just outside the walls; and the water there is warm and good.'

"Compelled to comply by the dread of seeming unreasonable if I declined the proposal made me, I sat down, the end of my horse's halter in my hand, wishing my courteous friends and the honour of their company at the bottom of the mill-stream, or the Tigris. To augment, if possible, my uneasiness, the conversation now turned on a man, a Koorde they said, found dead that noon, shot through the body, near a village some miles distant. The villagers had just brought the news, and the governor of the town would, no doubt, order search to be made after the murderer. I am sure that my colour did not change; I was now past that; I even took part in the talk. But I thought that Bedr—such was the name of my friend who had gone for the horses—

would never have reappeared. My lips spoke, but my mind was absent, and my eyes fixed on the street, watching every passer-by.

“As I sat thus, more uneasy than if the wicker-stool beneath me had been of red-hot iron, a well-dressed negro came hurriedly up; his face was glistening with perspiration, and his half-wild eyes almost starting out of his head. He neared me, and I recognised Aman the Sowahilee,¹ an ex-servant, an ex-fellow slave indeed, of mine, once like myself in the service of poor Kara-Mustapha Oghloo, the Pasha of Bagdad. With scarce a word of greeting he leant over my shoulder, whispered hastily into my ear the words, ‘For your life, escape;’ thrust into my hand something on which he forcibly closed my fingers with his own; and was gone.

“Every one present stared, and asked what this could mean. But before there had been time to answer, and while I could just, only just, restrain myself from rushing away, springing on my horse all unbridled as he was, and galloping wherever he might carry me, Bedr returned with the beasts. I crammed what the negro had given me (a glance had sufficed to show me that it was the letter which I myself had brought for Zenkee Agha, but

¹ A generic name for blacks from the Zanzibar coast.

open, crumpled and torn) into my breast fold, and rose. Within the *kaḥwah* and without, not an eye but was now directed on me, and many were the questions and the conjectures even in that brief interval ; I, however, busied with rope and bridle, paid outwardly no attention, and returned no answer. Short, though studiously cheerful and affectionate, were my adieus, as I fastened the last buckle in my horse's head-gear, tightened his girths, and vaulted on his back. Bedr and 'Alee the Seroojee, who were bent on fulfilling the usual duty of old acquaintances by accompanying me for a part of my way, mounted their horses also, though in a more leisurely fashion. They and the rest supposed that I had already taken my leave of Zenkee Agha, for I said that I had done so.

“ We rode, the three together, out of the town, and began the long winding descent into the valley, not half so rapidly as I should have liked. Every moment I kept looking around and behind me with a horrible fear ; though I knew that I had, in all probability, an hour's grace or more, before there was a serious likelihood of my being pursued or brought back. Indeed, it was far from unlikely, though of that I could not be certain, that the lateness of the hour might prevent anything from being done, or even attempted, till the next day. In matters of importance, Eastern deliberation is, you know, generally slow ; and the axiom that ‘haste is of the

devil,'¹ has been the saving of many a guilty, let alone many an innocent, head, from the days of the Prophet—God's blessing on him and his!—to our own.

"Gradually I quickened my pace ; my companions to keep up with me were obliged to do the same. We passed the great fountain at the first bend of the road, traversed the orchard-lined slope, sun-chequered through the thick leaves on either hand ; at its bottom reached the mill-stream. Unwillingly I allowed my thirsty horse a couple of minutes for drinking his fill ; Bedr and 'Alee watered theirs also ; we then resumed our route.

"My thoughts had full occupation, now with what I had left behind, now with what lay before me. I had designated the mountain-village of Sheykhān as my goal for the night, simply because it lay far off from Mardeen, on the main road, and entirely out of the direction which I really intended to take. My true object, Ra's-el-'Eyn, was away on our left hand, somewhat to the south. Though indeed, I had never yet been there myself, I had often heard the place mentioned, and had a pretty clear notion of its whereabouts ; for the rest, I might trust that chance inquiry by the way might prevent me from going far wrong.

"But, suppose I got to Ra's-el-'Eyn, what should I

¹ This saying is popularly ascribed to Mahomet himself.

find there? Should I be able to lie quiet and concealed till the storm had blown over? and when would Moharib come to find me out? What if he never came? what if the shifting uncertainties of Bedouin life interfered to separate me absolutely from him and from his tribesmen, now my only hope? How then should I regain hold of the lost end of the clue? How even know what had happened or might be happening at Diar-Bekr till perhaps knowledge itself would be too late for anything but despair? Had I not better at once push on straight for Diar-Bekr at all hazards, and take the chance of one more day, one more meeting? Possibly I might find everything smooth there? No; I put my hand to my breast, and felt the bulging folds made by the crumpled-up letter that lay concealed there. I remembered Aman's words, his look, as he gave it me; and could not question but that what I now bore about me as a warning to save my life, had been originally intended as a warrant for my death; a warrant written, signed, and sealed at Diar-Bekr itself. It was so indeed; how, and the means by which it had been averted, I will explain to you afterwards.

"But much more than to myself and my own affairs did my thoughts during that strange ride recur, not to Mardeen and Zenkee Agha, not to Beydar and the revengeful Koordes, nor even to Ak-Arslan and his

treacherous letter, but to her whom I had left in her father's house at Diar-Bekr, and what might next befall her. She too must have been in some degree, though how far I could not well guess, suspected, watched, compromised ; what might not follow ? Yet surely the apprehension of family disgrace, of town-talk and scandal, personal regard, a natural shrinking from being obliged to know too much, the honour of the kindred, above all the near arrival of the Emeer, her cousin, must smother investigation in prudent silence. The Sheykh her father, and the others, satisfied that I was gone once for all, would, I trusted, leave her quiet ; the whole affair would be one of those forgotten by most, and certainly mentioned by none."

"God is the Veiler," observed Tanṭawee, "and, for me, I like that name as applied to the Deity, better than I should the 'Detective.' It is the worthier one ; and its frequent use has had a beneficial effect on us Muslims ; it is of a piece with the often-quoted verse of the Kōran, 'Much suspicion is a crime.' The Prophet, who wrote it, had a certain magnanimity about him, which often led him into fortunate self-contradictions, broadening where his system would logically, and of itself, have narrowed ; and placing human life on a wider basis than a mere strict moralist might have allowed. After all," added he with a slight smile, in which Hermann could not help

joining, "the sons of 'Abd-Allah, son of 'Abd-el-Muttaleb the Koreyshee,¹ was half a Bedouin, and his system bears traces of the genuine Bedouin unfixedness of ideas; perhaps also of an underlying scepticism, inherent in our race, and no bad thing either in a lawgiver.

"In fact," continued the Egyptian Beg, as Hermann made no immediate answer, "who is it who so exactly knows what is really right, what wrong? or whether indeed there be any such things as absolute right and wrong, more than an absolute east and west? But assuredly if there be, they are not according to the hard traced-out limits of positive laws, ordinances, and definitions, in which legislators and moralists delight. So, my dear boy, while of course, and in agreement with all virtuous and correct people, I think that both your conduct, and that of Zahra' too, was very improper, and deserved all kinds of punishment, I must also approve the discreet forbearance of your Diar-Bekr friends, in case they actually exercised it; which I hope, and think most probable, they did."

Hermann resumed his narrative.

"To trust that such would be their conduct was indeed the only soothing balm I could lay to my soul; for the peril which I had brought on Zahra' was, in my more

¹ Mahomet.

collected moods, the only point on which I felt, or still feel, abiding self-reproach. But the thought that I had, however unwillingly and unknowingly, requited her love, her absolute, confiding, most unselfish love, with injury, was unendurable to me; and the sole comfort yet left me was to persuade myself that, all things duly weighed, she would remain exempt from blame or harm.

“The scales fell from my eyes. How blind I had been! on what rocks I had run! how near had I thrust myself, day after day, week after week, on all that was most rash, most dangerous, most hopeless, most fatal to us both! It was as though I had been travelling on and on for hours in a thick mist; and then the mist suddenly lifted up, and I saw the wilderness of precipices behind me, on the verge of which I had been carelessly treading, and another maze of precipices in front, all the worse because clearly defined, and no exit from among them. With this and more in my mind, not as separate and discursive thoughts, but in one single view, and, besides, with the whole anxiety of a refuge-place to be sought out, and an unknown land and future in prospect, you may imagine whether I had much spare attention left me to bestow on the lively conversation of my uninvited and most unwelcome companions who rode along with me, Bedr and 'Alee.

“However, there was no help for it; I must seem to

bestow the attention which I could not command. Like one in a dream I heard their voices, as though from a distance, talking of this and that, asking questions, giving news. Like one in a dream, too, I answered the voices; and while I did so my own voice also sounded to me as like one belonging to some one else, and, with theirs, to come from a distance. Yet I can even at this day remember that my replies were all steadily to the purpose. I had even coolness and reflection enough at the time to wonder at my own self, divided, it seemed, into two distinct persons; one of whom was talking with, and listening to, my fellow-riders, the other, lost in thoughts of anxiety and pain, far away. I might have added to these a third person, namely my own conscious and individual self, commenting on the other two, and interested in, I had almost said amused by, their performance.

“By field and stone, over brook and causeway, we rode on. The sun, already far declined in the sky when we started from Mardeen, and latterly hidden behind the dingy cloud-piles of a gathering heat-storm, now broke suddenly through a cleft of molten gold not far above the horizon, flooding rock and tree, hill and dale, with yellow dazzling light. It shone full in our eyes; we could scarcely see twenty yards before or around us.

“Well for me that it was so. For, exactly at that

moment of sun-burst, a party of seven horsemen, armed some with guns, others with spears, came towards us at scarcely bowshot distance along another path, parallel with ours, and which for a short space opened out by a cross gully on the valley in which we were. Their faces were set for Mardeen.

“’Alee and Bedr, busied just then in shading their eyes with their hands from the level and blinding splendour, did not notice the passers by. But I, whose senses were now wrought up to an almost preternatural quickness of vigilance, saw them only too clearly; and, in spite of the intervening light-curtain, recognised among them three of Ak-Arslan Beg’s men. Nor less did I, by their long quivering spears and fluttering head-dresses, recognise the four others for Bedouins of the South; these, I could not doubt, were no others than the Emeer Daghfel’s clansmen. Whom they sought and what they purposed needed no telling, at least to me.

“Here, then, was the fullest confirmation of my very worst fears; the game was up in every sense and in every quarter. Not yet half escaped from the vengeance of blood, I had run into the jaws of that far deadlier thing, the vengeance of family dishonour. For a few seconds my breath was absolutely taken away. I stiffened in my saddle where I sat. Look, I dared not, lest I should by doing so draw the attention of my com-

panions to the objects of my terror; lest they themselves should, with instinctive perception equal to my own recognise me in their turn. Yet how not look, when they might be even now preparing to rush upon our path? In that case, I knew beforehand what would be my fate: a shout, a spear-thrust, a death-struggle in the dust, a knife across my throat, and all would be over.

“But in that deluge of unearthly glitter then streaming down the valley, my death-hunters had, it seemed, distinguished nothing; intent only on what they deemed before, and which was in reality already behind them, they moved rapidly onwards, and in a minute more a winding of the road had hid them from our sight, and us from theirs, behind the screen of an intervening rock. I drew breath again. However the apparition just beheld had effaced every idea, near or far, from my mind, except one; namely, the necessity of putting, and that instantly, such a distance between Mardeen and myself, as might baffle the double chase which, I now anticipated would, before the evening light had faded from the sky, be hot on my track. But how? Bedr and Alee were yet with me.

“Almost immediately afterwards the sun had again immersed himself in the dense cloud-bed; and we found ourselves in front of a hill, wooded from bottom to top; the road for Diar-Bekr led up between the trees.

“Here was an opportunity for me to get loose, and I availed myself of it to the utmost ; using every phrase of polite expostulation to persuade my over-friendly associates to return home ; they would else be belated, the sun was near setting, I must put my horse to better speed, and so on. But they, desirous not to be outdone in courtesy, and meaning the very best, insisted on accompanying me to the top of the hill. I had by this time lost all tongue for conversing and all power of attention for listening ; and most glad was I that the narrowness of the track as it clomb and wound among the rocks and trees of the ascent, obliged us henceforth to ride not abreast, but one by one, and thus gave me fair pretext for keeping silence. Moreover, I hoped that my taciturnity might be taken by them as a hint, and so contribute to cool their persistent ardour for my company.

“Ten minutes more, and we had reached the summit of the hill. Here was a small, dry, open patch of ground, where the road separated into three paths ; the principal one led in the direction of Sheykhan ; two others branched off to the left. The sun had set ; and the dark clouds, out of which a low growl of thunder issued from time to time, threatened to make a short twilight.

“’Alee turned towards me. ‘Do you see that dark mountain ?’ said he. ‘Well ; it is a good two hours’ distance from hence ; and the village of Sheykhan lies

rather farther off on the other side of it. You can never get there in anything like reasonable time this evening ; and you know the proverb, ' Late guest, no supper.' It is sheer nonsense your trying to get there to-night. Give up the idea, brother Agha, and let us all ride on together only as far as Chark '—a hamlet not half-an-hour distant from where we were, somewhat off the main road among the hills. ' I know the mukhtar of the place, and will bring you to his house. There we shall find a good supper and a comfortable bed, besides barley in plenty for our horses, and we will make a merry night of it. You, if you choose, can set out again by break of day, and be at Sheykhan long before noon ; whilst Bedr Agha and I will return home at leisure. Better do so than kill your horse and yourself by travelling on a night like this. Listen to the thunder there—the rain will soon come down heavy—the road is a very bad one, rocks and ravines ; and God knows what might happen to you in the dark.'

" I had all the difficulty in the world to escape from his well-meant proposal ; which would, indeed, have been the only sensible plan for me to follow had I really meant to travel whither I said. But as that was precisely what I did not mean, to accept was out of the question.

" So I exhausted the whole vocabulary of thanks for their obligingness ; expressed my regret at I know not

what hindrances, conjured up on the spur of the moment ; and did my best to make the leave-taking as short as might be, while they on the contrary seemed determined to prolong it to the utmost. Could any one have looked into our three minds, and seen the total discrepancy between what I thought and what the two Aghas thought as we stayed our horses, a pretty little group on the open ground atop of the wooded hill in the pale evening light, with dark rock and ravine below, it would have been a curious spectacle.

“ At last they took the leave I was so impatient to give, and turned to retrace their Mardeen-wards way. While they were actually quitting me, I had my horse’s head in the direction of Sheykhan, for appearance’ sake ; but having done so I held him in, and remained where I was, waiting ; till, on looking back, I was certain that the last glimpse of my friends and their beasts had disappeared among the trees and windings of the desert. Then, leaving the road for which I had professed myself so eager on the right, I turned sharp left, and made off, as quickly as the fast-gathering gloom allowed me, first along the crest of the high ground, and then down into the valley beneath, keeping my course between west and south, in what I conjectured to be the direction of Meska, the nearest village, I had understood, and on my way to Ra’s-el-’Eyn.

"It was pitch dark before I had gone far, and the rain came down in torrents; the track, or rather no-track, was thwarted by trees, and strewn with the tumbled blocks of stone; occasionally also it led across swampy miry patches of deep mud, not easy to traverse even by daylight; often I lost it, such as it was, altogether. But I had no leisure now for picking my way; so rode on at a venture. I was in fact entangled in one of the worst parts of the Karajah mountains, and nothing remained for it but to push through at my best; further on, I knew, was plain. The thunder rolled almost unceasingly; the rain poured; unfortunately for me the lightning came faint and seldom; I should have welcomed the guidance of its gleam.

"What a constant strain it was on my eyes to try to discern the indications of a path! What a strair on nerve and hand to keep my beast from stumbling and starting amid the ever-recurring obstacles of the way! What a strain of mind not to lose the supposed direction of Ra's-el-'Eyn in the unknown labyrinth of mountain, valley, wood, and night! What momentary apprehension of rolling suddenly over, horse and man, into some torrent-bed or rocky chasm! Yet happen what might, I was very glad to be thus far advanced anyhow; and urged rapidly on with feverish haste to put the Karajah between myself and Mardeen; they must be keen

pursuers who would reach me then. In fine, what between wet, darkness, fatigue, hunger, wayside danger, and the uncertainty where I could find deliverance from all five, or from some of them at least, my thoughts were not unreasonably taken up, and I was for the moment spared many disagreeable reflections on my own conduct and on the past. Alas! they were only put off; they have had ample leisure to torment me since.

“Midnight had long passed, and the night must have almost waned, though not a glimpse of dawn yet broke the clouded sky, when I reached the village of Meska. I could just make out before me certain black things and patches that were, I knew, houses and enclosure-walls; but there was no light or sign of life and waking among the inhabitants; every door was closed, every window dark. The rain, which had ceased for awhile, began again heavily, the wind rose; and I was well pleased to discover, after much prowling about, an empty shed, in which my horse and I could take shelter from the weather, and await the morning.

“Sullenly it came, chill and showery. I was not sorry, because it kept almost every one within doors; so that I hardly met a single individual on the move while I hunted out a vendor or donor of bread and cheese—very bad cheese too; I remember its taste—part of which I ate on the spot, and part thrust into my saddle-bags for

the day's provision. I procured also some indifferent gritty barley for my horse ; and then, by means of a few cautious inquiries, found out on which side of me lay the road to Ra's-el-'Eyn. Towards it I now set forth, wet and weary to the last degree ; however, Karajah Dagh was behind me for good, and the plain before.

“ All that day, and all the night that followed, I rode on, with hardly a pause. How many black mud cottages and stubble fields, how many streams and swamps, re-soaked by the recent storm, how many monotonous undulations of ground and stone-strewn levels, each like the other in ugliness, I traversed, I do not know. Indeed, I barely noticed them ; my hands were burning hot, my mouth dry, my head throbbled, my sight was confused and hazy, my thoughts refused to frame themselves into any distinctness. The present, with its dreary surroundings, was a mere blank ; images of the past alone kept reproducing themselves, and the more I drove them away, the thicker they crowded on me. Home faces, home scenes, sights and sounds of childhood, my father, my sisters, my mother, my village play-fellows, figures absent for months, almost for years, from my mind, now passed and repassed, blended and thronged before me ; mixed up with Begs, Pashas, Aghas, Koordes, Bedouins, negroes ; one face, too, not of my old home, yet itself my true home, was unceasingly there among and through

the other phantoms, like the moon amid a mottled drift of clouds.

“I remember besides, that the day-sun was watery and hot, the evening clear and fresh, the night calm and starry. I remember that my horse—poor over-tasked slave—twice stumbled and fell with me in the dark; though how he rose and how I remounted him I do not remember. I remember the whity-grey look of the low cottage walls of Ra’s-el-’Eyn as I drew near it, its dogs and its refuse-heaps in the silvery morning. I remember myself, on foot somehow, being led or supported by some one through what seemed to me a kind of vault or passage; and then, for what was ‘an interval of five or six days, I remember no more.

PART III.

"The blank horizon mocks my eye
That seeks it round for thee ;
There is no message from the sky,
Nor answer from the sea.

"And thronging reasons urge, each one
Enough for love's despair ;
Yet still I hope, though reason none
For hope, but hope be there."

"But I must hasten with my tale," continued Hermann, looking up as he spoke at the moon, which now rose high and bright above the mast-head, announcing that midnight had passed, while the breeze freshened, and the ship, slightly plunging, drove on ; "there is not much more to tell.

"When, after several days of total unconsciousness, I came to myself, I was in a small low room, or rather house, for the flat earth-roof above it covered only one apartment. The floor was earth also, and a narrow mattress stretched on it formed my bed ; the walls were quite bare ; an open, but now unkindled fireplace occupied one end of the oblong space ; over my head were

the naked rafters, blackened with the smoke of winter-time. By my side, watching me as carefully as though I had been a sick child or brother of his, sat Aman, the negro who had rendered me such useful service at Mardeen. An old woman, bent and grey, in very dirty and tattered clothes, and generally with a house-broom, a pitcher, a copper-tray, or some suchlike article of domestic usage in her hand, kept coming in and going out every half-hour : she was the mistress of the cottage, and, her guests excepted, its sole occupant. Such, on my first waking, were the objects around me.

“It was some time before I understood, or even cared to understand, where I was, or how. Excessive weakness had deprived me not only of the power to ask many questions, but even of the wish to ask them. The very name of Ras'-el-'Eyn surprised me at first ; I recollected no reason for my being there. But the fever had left me ; hour by hour mind and body regained strength, and Aman, who had no notion that silence could be conducive to convalescence, was always ready enough to talk.

“Medicine of course there was and had been none ; a village *hakeem*¹ who occasionally officiated in the smearing of pitch or yellow-arsenic on mangy camels, shaved heads, and besides a much-worn razor of exces-

¹ Barber-surgeon.

sive sharpness, had about him a small pointed clasp-knife for surgical uses, had twice bled me copiously the very day of my arrival; but, fortunately for me, had not come near me since: the blackness of the blood having convinced him that even his skill could not avail. So Aman had summoned a poor, lean, old sheykh, the Imam,¹ of the hamlet, who from time to time came and read, with many errors of grammar, and some of pronunciation, the *Ḳoran* over me. The old man continued his visits after I had entered on the recovery of which he gave the main credit, next after God, to the efficacy of his readings, and I found him simple-hearted, conversable, and kind.

"More beneficial however than any directly curative measures of ḥakeem or *Karee*,"² had been the nursing given me by Aman, who, like most of his complexion, was a first-rate hand in that respect. Nothing had been left undone; indeed what fault there might be, had been more in excess than defect: as, for instance, his reiterated invitations to me to eat, on the very first symptom of my being able to do so. And if my diet (mostly *barghol*³ and butter, for milk was strictly forbidden) had not been

¹ Prayer-reader or precentor; sometimes very erroneously rendered "priest."

² *Ḳoran*-reader.

³ Half-roasted corn, coarsely ground, and boiled with grease, a favourite peasant dish in these parts.

very choice, the absence of all appetite, and consequently of feeding, during the height of the fever, and its redoubled vigour and keenness when it at last returned, rendered it at the one period harmless, and at the other healthful.

“But the best remedy of all was the life-giving briskness of the air, the air of the desert-border, scarcely inferior in purity to that of the desert itself. Uncontaminated even by the dirt of the village, it penetrated, a breath of healing, within the four walls of my narrow den; and before many days were over revived in me strength and interest enough to inquire and to hear what I in part guessed of myself, even before it was told me.

“The story was a very simple one. Fatigue, exposure, hunger, wet, fear, distress, remorse, had all been at work on me during the three days and nights that had elapsed from my last parting with Moharib at the north gate of Diar-Bekr up to my arrival at Ra's-el-'Eyn; and for several hours before reaching it I must have been in the half-delirium preceding a violent attack of fever. The desire to reach my hoped-for asylum, the village, had doubtless, though unknown to myself, kept me up till the moment of entering it; that done, I had dropped senseless from my horse.

“The inhabitants of Ra's-el-'Eyn are Arabs, and claim

descent from the ancient tribe of Tey'. From time immemorial they have, as you perhaps know—"

"No, I did not," observed Tanṭawee, "but I can well believe it—"

"Maintained themselves independent of all surrounding governments; and have made of their territory a sort of refuge-place for rebels, criminals, and runaways of every description from the neighbouring districts; a conduct securing them the alliance of many more useful at a pinch than the government itself. Seeing me, they naturally supposed me, and were not far wrong in doing so, to be one of their customary guests, in need of shelter; and at once received me to the hospitality, such as it was, and protection which they never refused when so sought. My dress and appearance too announced me for a person of some consideration; and my youth not improbably enlisted their sympathies in my behalf. So they lifted me up; and carried me into the almost empty cottage of an old woman, whose two grown-up sons were absent on a raid far west, commending me to her care. They next brought their ḥakeem, or muzeyyin¹ rather, to visit me; and his energetic proceedings had nearly spared them all future trouble, except that of grave-digging, on my account.

¹ Barber.

“However, God willed it otherwise; and on the evening of that same day, Aman the Sowahilee (who, dreading with good cause the consequences of his own boldness in saving me, had a few hours later, fled from Mardeen) arrived, but on foot, at the Arab stronghold, a refugee like myself. There he quickly learnt from the peasants that a horseman, whose appearance and horse they described, had come soon after sunrise, in pitiable plight; and that he was now lying, speechless and almost dead, in one of their huts. The negro guessed who it might be, and without delay went to the place where I was. There he took up his own quarters, nor had ever quitted me; and to his unremitting and affectionate though untutored care, I owe that I am not now, instead of being here with you on my way to 'Akka, quietly lodged among the little mounds, marked by rough stones and overgrown with wild narcissus, close outside the village of Ra's-el-'Eyn.”

“Is that the same Aman whom I have often seen attending you,” inquired Tanṭawee; “a big, raw-boned, pitch-black, ugly fellow, six feet high? He must have been an odd sort of nurse for one like yourself.”

“The same; and may it never be my luck to be worse tended,” answered Hermann, clapping his hands, and calling out “Aman” two or three times. At the call a bundled-up blanket on the deck near the foremast

opened out ; and a huge negro, in a not very clean suit of underclothes, issued from it, and approaching, stood, sleepy and barefoot, before the two talkers, rubbing his eyes.

“Aman,” repeated Hermann.

“My master,” answered the black.

“Take this and fill it for me,” said Hermann, tossing him the almost empty tobacco-pouch. Aman picked it up, retired with it to another part of the ship where the requisite article was kept, replenished the small cloth bag, and returned with it ; then, at a look, he filled, lighted, and presented his master’s pipe, doing afterwards the like service for Tanṭawee Beg.

“Bring us now some fresh water,” added Hermann ; the negro obeyed. As he came up a second time, jug in hand, “Show us your side, lad,” said his master.

The black unbuttoned and hitched up his cotton jacket, disclosing in the skin underneath it a ragged, unsightly seam, several inches long, the mark where a frightful gash had been made in the flesh, immediately below the left ribs.

Tanṭawee looked at it with the air of one to whom such things were by no means new, and asked, “How was that got ?”

Aman made no answer ; but Hermann said, “You shall hear, Beg, before my story is finished ; the wound

you see there was meant to have been in my side, only somewhat deeper." Then, addressing Aman, "Put the jug down here, and go to sleep again."

The negro made his obeisance, and returning to his blanket, rolled himself comfortably up for a second nap.

"That Sowahilee has twice saved my life at the risk of his own," remarked Hermann; "once at Mardeen, and once—how, I will soon tell you—in the desert; besides a third time, less dangerous to himself, but not for that less necessary to me, when he nursed me at Ra's-el-Eyn."

"He seems a fine sturdy fellow," answered Tantawee, looking towards the reclining figure, or rather the blanket which represented it; "and I do not wonder at your valuing him highly. He deserves it. When a negro is faithful he is so altogether; and, if kindly and discreetly treated, they are seldom otherwise.

"You however," continued the Beg to Hermann, "have forgotten to explain to me what this Aman of yours did for you at Mardeen. He brought you back the letter I remember, but how did he get hold of it himself? And how came he to be so well acquainted with its contents? I should hardly think that he was scholar enough to have read it, judging by his looks."

"It was only during my own convalescence at Ra's-el-Eyn that I myself became acquainted with the circum-

stances of that affair," replied his friend, resuming the interrupted narrative.

"While I was asleep in the guest-room of my Mardeen host, the Molla 'Abd-er-Rahman, his son, young Hamed, who had taken Ak-Arslan's letter in charge, went roving about with it in search for Zenkee Agha's domicile, of which and its whereabouts he had the vaguest possible notion. In the street he fell in with a servant of Zenkee Agha's, a native of Mardeen, and to him in turn he confided the letter. The servant promised to return home and deliver it to his master at once; but, instead of doing so, he went first to lounge and gossip in a neighbouring *kahwah*, where he idled the time away; and at last, whether overcome by the oppressive heat of that sultry afternoon, or, more probably, by the effects of an extra glass of *rakée*, stretched himself at full length on a bench, and there fell sound asleep, with the letter sticking half-way out of the pocket of his jacket.

"Meantime the negro Aman the Sowahilee, who was also now in Zenkee Agha's service, and had been so for some months, happened to enter the *kahwah*, where he found his white comrade snoring at his ease. Aman sat down, and entered into conversation with the other idlers there; from whom he learnt that the document thus carelessly exposed to view was a letter from Ak-Arslan Beg to his master. He made some inquiries as to who

had brought it from Diar-Bekr; and the answers and description given led him to conjecture that the original bearer could have been no other than myself, his old comrade, the white Agha, Ahmed.

"Suspecting some mischief at work, Aman approached the sleeper, gently drew away the document, and, saying to the lookers on, that he was going straight to the Castle, and would himself present the letter to its destination, left the *kaḥwah* with it. From thence he took his way to the lower quarter of the town, where lived an old Sheykh, a friend of his, and famous for the writing out of charms and amulets for negro use; him he begged to read him the letter, a feat much beyond Aman's own powers. The Sheykh, after some hesitation, yielded to the persuasive eloquence of a *besklik*,¹ and complied. But both reader and hearer looked aghast when they found that the document was nothing else than a concise request, expressed in excellent Turkish, to send the bearer Ahmed Agha the Bagdadee—for by that surname I was then commonly distinguished—with all convenient speed and despatch to a region considerably beyond Mardeen or any other town in the land of the living. Enjoining absolute silence on the old man, the negro

¹ A silver coin, equivalent to five piastres sterling; then worth about seven shillings English, now barely tenpence.

snatched up the letter ; what he did with it I have already told you.

“From Aman, too, I now heard further particulars regarding the search that had been made after me in every direction, north, south, east, and west ; except of course at Ra’s-el-’Eyn, whither no Koorde or Turk would much care to venture on such an errand. From Beydar, from Diar-Bekr, and from Mardeen, the cry for my blood had gone forth simultaneously ; and the armed peasants whom I had seen in the street, the banded horsemen whom I had so nearly met in the valley, were only a few of the many who, although from different motives, had resolved on taking my life. To the premature haste of the assassins at the entrance of the pass, and to my own sudden flight, covered by storm and darkness, I had owed my preservation ; half a day later, and nothing could have saved me.

“One circumstance, however, which Aman did not nor could know, I learnt somewhat afterwards. The spear-bearing riders, whom I had seen on the evening of my flight in company with Ak-Arslan’s men, were indeed Bedouins of the South, but they were not Sheybanees, nor did they belong to the Emeer Daghfel’s clan. They were on the contrary Benoo-Riah, tribesmen of my ever-true Moharib ; and it was at his instigation that they had joined themselves to the Koordish horsemen, in

appearance to aid, really to baffle, the chase. Two of them, keener-sighted than the Koordes, had in fact recognised me then and there on the road, but kept their counsel and said nothing of it, only urging the others to make more haste, and anticipate my escape from Marden; thus leading the pursuers away from the prey that they sought.

“ All this came to light through one of the Benoo-Riah themselves, who, ten days after the event, appeared under some ordinary pretext at Ra’s-el-’Eyn. There he spoke with Aman; but would not visit the cottage where I still lay, nor say the entire truth, even to the negro, such straightforward proceedings not suiting the distrustfulness of his kind. However, to Aman he gave intelligence that Akhoo-Leyla,¹ so he styled Moħarib, was yet in the neighbourhood of Diar-Bekr; there waiting, said he, with all the cool off-handedness of a Bedouin telling what he knows to be an utter lie, and in no way disconcerted if the hearer discovers it to be such, the celebration of the nuptials between the Emeer Dagħfel, the Sheybanee, and the daughter of Sheykh Asa’ad. The wedding would be a very ceremonious one, he said, and was to take place after a few days. Of all which, when

¹ “ Brother of Leyla.” A Bedouin, especially if unmarried, often derives his surname from his sister.

related to me, I believed or disbelieved as much as I chose, but said nothing.

“For a change had come over me; I hardly recognised myself. The fever on quitting me had taken away along with it every trace of the excessive agitation and anxiety under which I had been labouring before, and had left me singularly calm; hopeful indeed and desirous at heart, but in the main disposed for the present to float with the stream and trust to events.

“In this calm of mind it seemed to me that every person and everything without must be calm also. Hours long I lay, without movement or desire to move, watching now the lights and shadows that played on the wall, now the comings and goings of my age-bent hostess on her house-keeping cares; or listening to the half-childish talk of the old Koran-reading Sheykh and Aman at my bedside. No reflection of the past troubled me, no forecasting of the future, no wish even to be otherwise or elsewhere than I was, disturbed my quiet. The thought of Zahra’ herself aroused no vehement emotion; the mention of her Bedouin cousin and suitor’s name no apprehension. It was well with her; it was well with me; it was well with all; and should be well. Fear had left me; the passionate, unsatisfied longings of my heart had left me too. I was in truth unwittingly experiencing in myself, what I have since observed in others, that pro-

longed delirium causes a breach in the continuity of life which may be, in unimpaired frames at least, ultimately quite bridged over, but not at once. Or, if you will, I remained these days, though awake, in a kind of half-slumber, a pleasing trance, from which the rousing, though deferred, must come at last. It came only too soon.

“Meanwhile a fortnight passed thus; every hour brought me a sure, though gradual, increase of strength. Before long I could not merely sit up, but even, aided by Aman, quit the room and get out of doors a little space, there to enjoy the pure free air of the open plain, and the boundless prospect of its level, west and south. Eastward the blue wavy line of Sinjar¹ fringed the horizon; to the north the dark mass of Karajah-Dagh closed in the view more nearly. How often did I gaze on its wooded screen, and languidly wonder what was going on behind it, what might next issue forth from it; though while gazing I felt little impatience, contented in a manner to be just then an unoccupied convalescent, and no more. But when, the fortnight ended, I tried my foot in the stirrup, and found that I could, with some help to be sure, get on my horse’s back again, something of the old feeling came over me; and I began to look at the distance with

¹ A low mountain-chain of Mesopotamia, the stronghold of the Yezedes, described by Layard.

other eyes. However, the caution of the inhabitants would not have allowed me, even had I been then able, to venture far without the bounds of the village.

“A fortnight, three weeks, a fourth had begun. Restlessness was fast growing on me; and on the first afternoon of that fourth week I was sitting on a small green hillock without the hamlet, gazing anxiously northward, when a cloud of dust arising from the plain announced a troop of horsemen. They approached; their lances, their manner of riding, their accoutrements proclaimed them Benoo-Riah. It was Moḥarib, and with him half a dozen of his clan. Alighting at some distance from the village, they held a brief parley with the inhabitants, several of whom had gone out to meet them, and welcome them, for they were well-known guests of old, to the hospitality of the place.

“While the first salutations were yet being exchanged, Moḥarib left the rest, and came where I was. We embraced like brothers who had been parted not for days but years; and, for the very abundance of what we had to say the one to the other, said little then beyond inquiries after health and expressions of pleasure. A sheep was killed and cooked, plenty of barchol¹ and rakeek²

¹ A favourite dish of half-roasted corn. See p. 277.

² The thin, wafer-like, unleavened bread, ordinary in the East.

prepared, and the new arrivals sat down to an abundant supper, to which their appetites did full justice ; the very dogs without the circle found indifferent pickings on the well-gnawed bones that were thrown to them that evening.

“The conversation between the Bedouins and their half-Bedouin hosts seemed to me, in my limited acquaintance with the dialect and the idioms employed, little better than an enigma which excited without satisfying my curiosity. But supper over, Moharib and I went apart into the cottage ; and there, seated together on the couch which had long served me for a sick bed, but was now modified into a divan, the only one that the poverty of Ra’s-el-’Eyn could afford, passed well-nigh the night through in talk that left no inclination for early sleep.

“His story, given in consecutive form, ran thus. Every one at Diar-Bekr supposed me dead ; a distorted version of my adventure on the morning that I quitted Beydar had given rise to this belief, which had subsequently been studiously fostered, in my interest, by those who knew or guessed my real whereabouts. Five days after my disappearance the long-expected Emeer of Benoo-Sheyban had arrived at Diar-Bekr, and remained there a fortnight. Great had been the display of hospitality on the occasion, and countless were the sheep slaughtered (Moharib dwelt on the fact with

undisguised Bedouin relish), with festivities of every description to match. But no wedding had taken place, much to the surprise of all, said Moḥarib with a covert smile about his mouth; that was, report affirmed, to be celebrated on their arrival at Zulfeh in Nejd, on the frontiers of Sedeyr, within the Emeer's own territory. Thither they would journey by the easiest and most frequented route, that which leads from Diar-Bekr by Harran¹ to Rakka, on the Euphrates; and thence, following the westerly bank of the river, down to the desert. The caravan had already set out, but would probably be some three months on its way before reaching Zulfeh, as it was sure to travel slowly and to halt often.

"I inquired about my former master, Ak-Arslan, and his doings. Old Afsheen Beg's marriage, and the feastings and amusements attending it, in some of which Moḥarib had managed to take part, had been held at the time appointed. Ak-Arslan remained but a short time more in the town, and then took leave, and returned with his Koordish retinue, my ex-comrades, to Jezeerah. 'The Beg,' added Moḥarib, 'was in very bad humour. His men too were discontented; some of them, one Maḵan Agha in particular, a very popular fellow among

¹ The Haran of the biblical Abraham.

them, attributed your disappearance and supposed death to their master's machinations, and plotted revenge. But what came of it, or whether anything was likely to come of it, I do not know.'

" 'Never fear,' I answered, laughing, 'Ak-Arslan Beg can take good care of himself; he knows his men better than they think for. But what said the Emeer Daghfel? Was he aware of any thing?'

" 'Nothing,' replied Moharib; 'Sheykh Asa'ad very wisely kept all quiet, for fear of scandal; and neither the Emeer nor his men so much as guessed the truth. Besides the Sheybanees camped outside the walls some way off in the gardens, and had little communication with the townsfolk. As to the Emeer, he lodged with his intended father-in-law, and there heard only what they chose to tell him. There was indeed some talk about the Jinnee: it served to put off the wedding.'

" 'God preserve her!' said I; 'she is as clever as she is brave, and as brave as she is beautiful. There is none like her on earth!'

" 'The wiles of women are indeed wonderful,' answered the Bedouin; 'she is the miracle of her age. God keep her, and grant her desire, and yours, my brother! Who perseveres attains.'

" I next asked from what quarter suspicion had first arisen regarding us—who was its author.

“‘Some one of Rustoom Beg’s household,’ he answered, ‘gave the alarm, the very day you arrived at Diar-Bekr. You had been watched the year before, Agha, though you were not aware of it. The Beg took up the matter, went to the kiosk; and—you know the rest. Ak-Arslan was soon informed, and the Sheykh Asa’ad was taken into counsel. He refused to stir in the affair, but did not oppose. By the others your death was resolved on. May my father and mother be your ransom,’ he added; ‘God frustrated their designs.’

“‘And now brother,’ said I, when he had finished, ‘what is to be done next? Where are we to go? when shall I meet her again?’

“His reply unveiled to me the plan, formed originally at Diar-Bekr, and now to be executed in earnest. It was thus:—

“Moharib’s clansmen, the Benoo-Riah, were now the most part, with their aged chief, Abou-Zeyd, the Emeer Faris, encamped near Tell-’Afr,¹ westward of Moşool. Thither we were next to go; and when we arrived, Moharib was to present me to the Emeer as an adopted brother, and one seeking protection and assistance from the tribe. I should, he said, be without doubt well received, and asked to explain the object I had in view.

¹ A rising pasture-ground.

‘This,’ continued Moḥarib, ‘you must at once do, briefly and plainly, to the Emeer himself, during your very first meeting, while you are yet under the shadow of his tent, and your hand on the tent-pole. There would be no use your attempting to conceal anything from Aboo-Zeyd: he is shrewd and far-sighted, and nothing escapes him; but he is generous, and never refuses a suppliant. Besides, he will be the readier in this matter on account of an old grudge existing between us and Benoo-Sheyban, whom he will be glad to have an occasion of annoying.’

“‘We might have,’ he continued, ‘to wait for some days at Tell-’Afr; after which, when all was ready, he and I, accompanied by a dozen or so of the more daring among the clan, would set out southwards by the shortest track, till we fell in with the Emeer Daghfel and his caravan, probably in the neighbourhood of Zobeyr, west of Baṣrah. Once met, we would, by force, stratagem, or both, find means to enter the caravan, and carry off with us the ‘sought for’—Moḥarib never designated Zahra’ in my presence by her own name—away to some secure region, beyond danger of pursuit.

“Of this scheme Zahra’ had herself, as I now learnt, been fully informed, and had consented to it; only the precise time and place of its fulfilment could not be fixed beforehand, amid the uncertainties both of their move-

ments, and of our own. Thus far alone was certain, that the attempt must be made somewhere on the line of route between Rakka and the boundaries of Nejd; if once the latter were past, nothing could be done."

"And when you had compassed your wish, whither did you intend betaking yourself, Ahmed?" asked Tanṭawee.

"I did not very well know myself," replied his friend. "Sometimes I thought of Damascus, and of a life there in trade or business of whatever sort; at other times I designed settling in the Hejaz or Yemen; or I might seek my fortunes in Egypt; and this last, you see, I have in fact done, though not with the object or under the circumstances that were then in my mind. But, if you will have the truth, my projects went in their definite shape hardly, or not at all, further than Zahra'; with her they began, with her they ended; from her to her was the measure of my thought."

"It would never have answered," remarked Tanṭawee, musingly. "Well for her as for you, your fate, wiser than yourself, interfered."

Of this comment Hermann took no notice; but continued—

"Three days Moḥarib and his men remained at Ra's-el-'Eyn; their departure and mine was fixed for the fourth. Every trace of the feebleness left on me by my

late illness was rapidly disappearing, and with the weakness of body, that of mind and will was fast leaving me also. But the calm, the contented rest of soul that I had, as for a short breathing-space enjoyed, vanished too ; and in its stead my old restless, impetuous, longing self returned. Not at once, eager as I was to mount and follow on the track of her who was then, as ever, all to me ; yet the first day's sun set on my renewed converse with the brother of my love, and I had no feelings but of joy, almost of satisfaction.

“It could not last. The sight of a face so intimately inwoven in my mind with the memory of hers ; the sound of a voice that had blended with hers that night of meeting ; the frequent mention ; the nearer hope—all worked secretly, and prepared the inward stab of my peace that bleeds even now, and will bleed till death. It was given suddenly, in sleep.

“That evening, Moḥarib and I had sat up till late in the open air, between the tents and the village, both of them whitened by the intense moonlight of the plain. After much talk, chiefly of her, we separated ; and I returned, more serious than before, but still cheerful, to my accustomed lodging-place, and lay down for rest.

“Sleep soon came, but unquiet, and full of dreams. It seemed to me that I was embarked on a ship, sailing over a distant and stormy sea ; *Zahra*’ was in a boat close

by; I strove to come to her, and she to me; in vain; the waves drove us apart. Then I was at Rosenau, my birthplace; Zahra' sat by me in my father's house, but all around the table were faces of corpses; her face too was fixed and deadly pale. Then I was at Bagdad, in the sleeping-room; my old master was speaking to me about Zahra'; blood ran down his dress. Sa'eed lay near dead; I felt, but could not see, his fingers cold in my hand. At last these too disappeared, and gave place to a dream so vivid, so painfully real, that no waking pang could have exceeded its anguish: I have never since ceased to feel it."

"What was the dream?" asked Tantawee, as Hermann paused an instant. "Can you repeat it?"

"I could, even now," replied Hermann; "point by point, just as it came before me; the miserable vividness of its representation has not been softened by lapse of time, nor can be. But tell it so I cannot, nor will. Hear it, however, as I put it into verse five months later, while sailing, drear and lonely, along the Bahreyn coast.¹

"Oh why is memory in the brain?
Or why the hated dreams of sleep?
To weave the real with imaged pain,
And weep-out tears again to weep.

¹ In the Persian Gulf.

Last night, within the garden bower
We sat together, side by side;
The lover of an ill-starred hour,
And she that should have been my bride.

"I spoke, she answered, words of love;
I sought her drooping hand to clasp.
She looked around, beneath, above,
And trembled to return the grasp.
I asked a kiss; her lips she gave,
A hasty gift, as snatched from fear:
So hastes the oft-detected slave
Who knows his master's footsteps near.

"Then round my neck her arms she cast,
And on my breast her head she laid,
And present woe and anguish past
In one brief moment overpaid.
'Yet, dearest, why this silence long
To many a message, many a line?
What cold mistrust, what trait'rous wrong
To fraud me of thy answering sign?

"Oh, words of scorn and words of shame
Are all for months these ears have heard;
From thee nor line nor message came,
But aching heart and hope deferred.
I knew thou wouldst not leave me so;
Not thine the heart to change or pall;
Thou couldst not thus her love forego
Who gave thee much—who gave thee all.'

"Her tears were trickling on my check,
Her scattered locks my arm o'erspread,

And the wild kiss that fain would seek
To drain life's proper fountain-head.
I clasped her round, I bade her rise,
I bade her fly nor tarry more;—
'New love, new hope before us lies,
And open stands the prison door.'

"Oh, how to rise, or how to fly
The toils of fate are round me thrown :
I cannot live; I may not die;
No more thy love; no more thy own.'
A rustling tread, a parted bough,
A hateful face;—alone I lay :
Full through the casement on my brow
Glared the broad mockery of the day."

"And did you actually dream all this?" said Tan-tawee.

"All of it from beginning to end, the false with the true, the fancied with the real," answered Hermann. "In the verses I have now recited there is not a word or a circumstance but was then present to me in my dream. I knew it for mere idle self-torture; yet it was of evil omen; and I felt it to be so, and did my best to shake it off, but could not. Let it be." With an effort he again went on.

"When I woke, the sun, shining in through the small window-aperture in the side wall and the half-open door, stood considerably above the horizon. I was alone; Aman had gone out in quest of milk, or perhaps merely

to idle and gossip with the villagers ; the old woman, my hostess, did not appear. Moḥarib and his companions were in their tents. With a new feeling of loneliness, I went thither, hoping to find some indications of the departure which I now longed for feverishly ; but there too I met with no sign of stirring for the day. One Arab lay stretched on the ground, negligently scratching it with a stick ; a second was smoking his *sebeel* ;¹ a third was asleep. Moḥarib greeted me, and invited me to share in a bowl of half-dried dates that stood by, but seemed as little inclined to move as the rest. It was my first lesson in the apparent apathy of the Bedouin character, alternating with intense activity and prolonged endurance. I did not relish it, but had no remedy but to submit.

“A third day came, and, much to my annoyance, passed in precisely the same manner : I could neither understand the reasons of the delay, nor when it would be at an end. That evening, however, I learnt the cause from Moḥarib. There was danger on the road before us from some hostile tribes, *Seba'a* and *Fida'an* he called them, with whose movements he and his men were evidently, how I could not divine, well acquainted ; and to have left *Ra's-el-'Eyn* sooner would have been useless

¹ The short tobacco-pipe common among Bedouins.

rashness. But if the night brought, as he hoped it would, better news, we might safely begin our journey to Tell-'Afr on the following day.

"Next morning in fact we set out. My horse, now thoroughly rested and refreshed, bore me well; and my companions, though fond of careering about, and making, what seemed to me, many unnecessary little excursions to right and left, kept on the whole a steady and not over-rapid pace. This was my first experience of Bedouins on their own ground, the 'open' or 'desert'; and I was astonished by the contrast between the constraint and furtive timidity of their manners when within town-limits, and the careless licence they assumed when fairly beyond them. 'Desert is liberty' says the proverb, and they did their best to illustrate it. High animal spirits, loud laughter, coarse jests, and horse-play of every kind were the order of the day. Some shouted out most unmusical verses, half brag, half impertinence; others diverted themselves with practical jokes far from refined; all, except indeed Moḥarib and one black-bearded, harsh-featured man, Khalid by name, who seldom spoke and never laughed, behaved like boys just let out of school, and very ill-bred boys too.

"Though an adopted brother of the clan, there was still enough of the stranger about me to impose on my rough comrades a certain restraint where I was con-

cerned ; however, I came in for my part of the customary banter—enough to have offended me had I not known that it was good-humouredly meant, and that it would be foolish in me to take it otherwise. So I joined freely in the sport, and, as far as I could, paid it back in the same coin. This conduct procured me the advantage, if no other, of becoming more thoroughly acquainted with the dialect and other idiomatic peculiarities, as well as with the character and ways of the ‘people of the desert.’ Aman kept generally alongside of me ; but it was surprising to see how naturally he fell in with the odd humour of the Bedouins, and how cordially on their part they took to him.

“We were five days on the route ; the country was mostly either level, or only broken by long undulating ridges, with here and there an isolated mound rather than a hill ; the ground, judging by the rich pasturage everywhere, though now partly dried up by the summer heat, must have been fertile ; but except two small villages, each with its ill-defined plot of indifferent tillage around it, there was no sign of cultivation. We passed several little streams, and two wide, but nearly waterless, river beds, else the landscape was monotonous enough ; trees there were hardly any, and the scrub bushes that occasionally took their place appeared all of the same kind.

“Our march was a regular one: twice in every twenty-four hours we halted; once in the morning, from a couple of hours or so after sunrise till noon, when it was the custom of the Bedouins to make a light meal, and indulge in a nap; once again in the evening, somewhat after sunset till midnight. At the two villages, however, we came to a special halt, and were hospitably entertained; the inhabitants were themselves half-Bedouins, 'Arab-Deerah,'¹ who had only lately exchanged the pastoral for the agricultural form of life.

“What, however, most surprised me was the apparent absence of other Bedouins on our route; though the district we were traversing was, I knew, the pasture-land of many tribes that cross and recross it in every direction. But here it was the same loneliness that I have subsequently often observed at sea; where of the thousand ships sailing to and fro on the very line of voyage, not one is sighted often for days together; so small is the proportion they bear to the vast space over which they go. In our case, however, I soon learned another cause of solitude: namely, the anxiety of our band to elude hostile encounters—for they had almost as many feuds on hand as there were clans to quarrel with—and their

¹ Arabs freshly settled in permanent dwellings.

consequent care to avoid, not meet, other wayfarers of their kind.

“Once only did a chance meeting take place; and then those whom we fell in with were Arabs of Shomer, friends of the Benoo-Riah. Even thus the first greetings were not without suspicion; and the two old matchlocks of our party were diligently loaded and primed at the first announcement of a horseman in sight. The Shomer, were however, bound for the west, on a foray against the 'Anezeh Bedouins, I think; and their movements no way regarded us. But their keen glance at once detected and fastened on my foreign appearance; and had I been in any other escort, I should hardly have escaped the stripping by which Bedouins are wont to levy duty on those who enter their territory without due warrant. As it was they saluted me guardedly and with a sort of respect; but hardly addressed me a question, though their inquiries regarding me were numerous. I gathered thus much from their side glances towards me while they conversed with the others. The answers given contained, I fancy, more lies than truth.

“The morning of the fifth day dawned on us while we rode, slower than usual, over a perfectly level plain; when I noticed that our party, ten in all before, was now diminished to eight. I inquired, and learnt that two had gone on in advance to give notice at Tell-'Afr of our

arrival. Soon the horizon in our front was narrowed in by the rising ground, and a conical hill of no great height indicated the goal of our journey. The abruptness of its outline, a feature shared by many of the banks and ridges hereabouts, gave it a semblance of being at a greater distance than it really was; and I was agreeably surprised to find how quickly we approached it. We were soon engaged in the bewildering ups and downs of what seemed huge earth-waves in a random tempest; dark green patches indicated the presence of water, the ooziings of the hills; and the traces of cattle and men became more and more frequent. I asked whereabouts the encampment was. 'Near,' my guides answered; but I saw no sign, till on crossing a highish ridge I perceived half-way up the opposite side some sixty tents, black-dotted over the gray-green slope. They were high and low, large and small; one, two, three, and four-poled in length; most stood near each other arranged in lines; a few were scattered and apart. Among them went and came several figures of women in long dark blue robes; also a few men.

"Towards these tents we now directed our way. Four horsemen issued forth to meet us, and interchanged with Moharib some of those brief questions and answers which constitute the freemasonry of the desert. We entered the encampment; and more than one tent-rope had

nearly tripped up my horse's steps, more than one swarthy form had belied its apparent poverty by the offer of unlimited hospitality, before we reached a tent larger than the rest, but of the same dingy materials outside. Inside, however, I could see at a look that it was hung with striped cloth, carpeted, and even, after a fashion, furnished.

"At its door we dismounted. Moharib went in first, making me a sign to follow; Aman, and three or four Bedouins, followed unbidden. Along one side of the tent ran a sort of divan, carpets and cushions only; saddle bags, copper utensils, and arms lined the space. In the further corner of the tent, lay, rather than sat, an old man, white-bearded, wrinkled, and with dim eyes almost closed by the falling eye-lids, relaxed through age; his stature, while straight, must have been tall, and his limbs large before years had shrunk them. He was well, indeed, for a Bedouin richly dressed, in a striped silk gown, red and white, with a bright-coloured silk handkerchief of many folds round his head; his undergarments, silk and linen, were stained with saffron. The general expression of his face was that of an old lion, yet good-humoured in its grimness; his forehead was broad and wrinkled; his complexion struck my eye as singularly white after the dusky sunburnt faces of those amongst whom I had lately been; perhaps too he was

better washed. A small much-thumbed book in gilt binding, a section of the Koran, lay near him; his hand held a maple-wood pipe-stick; he had evidently just put aside the former in favour of the latter.

“Moḥarib approached and kissed the large wrinkled hand which his chief held out to him. Then sitting down on his heels close in front of the old man, he entered into a long talk, of which, owing to the undertone in which it was carried on, I could hear little; though most of it, I believe, was about myself. Abou-Zeyd, for by this name the aged chief was better known throughout the clan than by his proper appellation of Faris, listened attentively, and now and then made some remark. At the conclusion of the conference he beckoned Moḥarib towards him, and lifting up the young man’s head-dress on one side, whispered in his ear; the answer was given with similar caution. All the while Abou-Zeyd’s eyes were fixed on me with a shrewdly searching glance that belied the dimness of age.

“He now beckoned to me. I came forward; saluted him as Moḥarib had done; and then, with one hand laid on the tentpole close by, to denote my demand of his protection and help, related my story. He listened almost in silence, and with evident good-will; my manner and appearance pleased him, nor was the substance of my request far from his own inclinations. When I had

finished, I again took his hand and kissed it. 'Let your fear subside, and your heart be at rest; you have obtained your desire,' he said. The tent was now nearly full of men, who had entered one after the other during this interview. 'Be witnesses all of you,' said the old chief, addressing them, 'that we have given our protection to this Ahmed the Bagdadee. He is one of us, and our brother; his enemy is our enemy, his friend our friend; and his desire our care.' 'We are witnesses,' was answered by all.

"This sufficed; nor during the twenty days longer that I remained among the tents did the Emeer Faris ever make a second allusion to the object of my coming. But we often conversed together on other topics; for Aboo-Zeyd was very curious to hear all that I could tell him about Bagdad, Diar-Bekr, and the other towns thereabouts. He had, years before, visited them all himself, and his memory was wonderfully retentive. He even showed himself partial to my company; and, I have no doubt, exercised all his influence—the chief of a Bedouin clan has no authority, properly speaking—with the tribe in my behalf.

"While at Tell-'Afr I in a way completed my schooling in Bedouin life, and was astonished at the narrowness of its ordinary range. Camels, sheep, and horses, formed the staple of the thoughts, the talk, and, so to speak, of

the existence of those around me ; where the best pastures for the different times of year, or, as they expressed themselves, the rising of such and such a star, were to be found ; how this camel had strayed, that one been found ; who owned this horse or that ; of the foal of that mare ; and so on, without end, like one monotonous air played on a scrannel pipe. Next came raids, forays, quarrels, makings-up ; but in nine-tenths of these too the beasts rescued or carried off played in the narration a much more conspicuous part than the skill or prowess of the men themselves.

“ Boasting and bragging there was indeed, and enough ; but all of an isolated and individual character, there was evidently little cohesion in the tribe itself ; and none, or next to none, between it and others.

“ Eating was another favourite topic ; love-adventures too, but very unromantic and animal the most. Of religion there seemed slight care : a few said their prayers, that is, when the fancy took them ; the greater number absolutely ignored them. Nor did the prevalent coarseness of manners and bluntness of feeling that I could not but observe in most, please me ; morals too appeared lax, at least in words ; and the sentiment of honour, keen on some points, was oddly wanting on others.

“ Yet the basis of character was good, frank, and

manly ; the intellect active, the perceptions acute, the judgment sound. But these better qualities were, in far the most instances, stunted, and often in a manner blighted, by the mere savageness of life ; and the circle of thought contracted, till apparently incapable of expansion. ' Good materials,' said I to myself, ' but spoilt or wasted in the using.'

"The Benoo-Riah among whom I was, numbered in all between three and four hundred fighting men ; one hundred or rather more, were provided with horses, the others rode on camels. But though few in number, and not wealthy, even for Bedouins, they stood high for reputation of bravery ; long-headed too and crafty, they were feared more than many much larger clans. Moreover, they were a branch of the great 'Adwan stock, and as such connected by blood or ancient usage with powerful allies, chiefly of the southerly districts. Their own ordinary places of summer resort were, as now, in the north ; but when winter came they were in the habit of migrating to the neighbourhood of Samarra, on the lower Euphrates, where they had pasture-lands in common with the Shomer Bedouins, their constant friends.

"Rather more than half the tribe were present in the encampment of Tell-'Afr ; and though the men generally absented themselves for short distances, in the day-time, on such desultory occupations as pastoral life affords,

they seldom failed to return for supper in the evening. Then would follow, in the cool night air outside the tents, interminable conversations of the kind I have already described, now and then diversified by poetical recitations or story-telling, till any hour, however late; for the habit of frequent sleep during the day renders Bedouins very independent of the prolonged night rest usual among the more regular inhabitants of towns and villages."

"From all that you say," observed Tanṭawee, "I should hardly think that a Bedouin life had much place in your projects of a future for yourself and your bride."

"No; certainly not," replied Hermann; "it could neither have suited her nor me. There is indeed a real pleasure in its physical freedom; but the price at which it has to be bought, the sacrifice of civilized comfort and of intellectual activity, is too high for deliberate option. For those born and bred among tents, camels, and sheep, such an existence is well enough—at any rate so long as they know no other; yet I have seldom seen a Bedouin otherwise than discontented with his own lot, after he has once become acquainted with the world of fields and gardens, houses and towns."

"Did Moḥarib never propose to you anything of the sort, however?" continued the Egyptian. "You, as a client and brother of the tribe, must, I should think, have had some such offers made you."

"He did," replied his friend; "and so did the Emeer Faris, and others. Indeed a definite number of sheep and camels were placed at my disposal, had I chosen to make it a bargain; and I might have easily been on a footing with the best of the clan. But the offer was not to my taste, and I evaded it; subsequent reflection has only the more convinced me that I was right in my decision."

"Yet there are fine fellows among these Arabs of the pasture-lands," rejoined Tanṭawee—men of courage, tact, and good sense, with whom there must be pleasure in associating; poets too, eloquent speakers, full of imagination and thought; women, also, of no common energy and intelligence, besides beauty, they say. In fact, we town-Arabs regard these very Bedouins as our fountain-head, and consider what brilliant qualities we ourselves possess, to be derived from them. More than this, it is to them, as to a standard, we refer when we apprehend any falling off from ancestral excellence on our own part; and by their example we try to correct the degeneracy of our more artificial ways, and to renew the freshness of our type. Your blood-brother Moḥarib seems to have been a better specimen of a genuine Arab than town-walls usually contain; the old Emeer Faris, too, I dare say; and such men could hardly be mere exceptions, or prodigies rather, either among the Benoo-

Riah or other tribes. I should more readily suppose them samples, picked ones, certainly, yet in the main not unlike the rest in the heap."

"True," replied Hermann, "you have judged correctly. But this is exactly a proof of what I myself said, that the substratum of character is good, excellent indeed; only, in nineteen instances out of twenty nothing is built on it, because the surroundings furnish nothing wherewith to build. Narrow interests, petty aims, unsettled habits, discomfort, want, may not absolutely destroy a superior nature; but they warp it, cramp it, thwart it, till it becomes a mere possibility of unfulfilled promise; a stunted and fruitless growth. Education, order, and even comfort, are, I see, not less necessary to the development of man, than air, water, and sunlight are to that of a plant. Some indeed struggle through and flourish after a fashion; some higher-natured than ordinary, and favoured by outer circumstances, attain perfection; but not many. Of these was my poor brother Moḥarib; whose faculties, early and intense passion, well bestowed, stimulated into a fulness which subsequent chances of life maintained and strengthened."

"How was that?" asked Tanṭawee; "did he never tell you the past story of his love and life? You alluded to it, if I remember, before."

Hermann was about to reply; but even then a touch

of air, cooler and brisker than they had yet felt, blew off the shore and swept the deck ; then died away.

"Midnight is past," said he ; "that is the land-wind, and morning is not far off. If I begin with Moḥarib's history, there will be no time left for finishing mine ; indeed, tell it as briefly as I can, I must abridge somewhat, or else leave it to another day."

"Abridge then," answered the Beg, "but at all events relate the end of your adventure ; I cannot suppose that having once got so far, you abandoned your dangerous and not over-lawful scheme without putting it to the test."

Hermann sighed, and resumed.

"During the twenty days that we remained in the tents of Benoo-Riaḥ, Moḥarib busied himself right and left in enlisting companions to our enterprise ; the number of eligible men then present at Tell-'Afr was small ; and of these again many declined sharing in an undertaking that promised more wounds and danger than booty or profit. However, nine at last consented ; Moḥarib, Aman—who from the day he found me in the cottage at Ra's-el-'Eyn has never left me—and myself made up the band to twelve.

"The Riaḥees were as follows : First Ja'ad, surnamed Ja'ad es-Sabāsib¹ from his skill in discovering tracks,

¹ Plural of the Arab word *sabsad*, "a pathless waste."

invisible to ordinary eyes, across the widest desert,—a man of middle age, brave and enduring.

“Next Harith, a wiry mulatto; his mother was a negress; a perfect devil in a fray; he was short and thick-built, his age about twenty-five.

“Then Howeyrith, half-brother of the former, by an Arab mother, a handsome lad, fair for a Bedouin; he was scarce twenty years old, but had already taken part in many a raid.

“Fourthly, Musa’ab, a ruddy cheerful fellow, fond of jokes and satirical verses; a genuine Riahee scapegrace, and the life of our party.

“Fifthly, Doheym, bright-eyed and dark-complexioned; his mother was of the Benoo’Aqra clan.¹ He spoke little; but was a good poet, and a desperate fighter. Moḥarib and he were great friends.

“The others, Sa’ad, Moḍarrib, Do’eyj, and Shebeeb, were all picked men, young, and spirited; Shebeeb was a negro, and naturally he and Aman soon became sworn brothers.

“All had swords, lances, and knives; but, except my two pistols, which, though adopting in other respects the same dress and weaponry as my companions, I still retained, there were no fire-arms in our band. My carbine I had made a present of to the head man of

¹ A southern tribe, natives of Yemen.

Ra's-el-'Eyn ; he had evidently desired it, and I could not refuse a token of gratitude for the protection and hospitality shown me in the village.

"But I must hasten on. How we made our scanty preparations for the fifteen days of journey before us ; how we took leave of the Emeer Faris—good old man—and our comrades of the encampment ; how some of the women wept at the departure of their husbands or brothers, while others stood by and encouraged us with shrill cries and words of good omen ; how before noon we mounted our horses and rode away from Tell-'Afr ; how I turned back, with an unexpected feeling of regret, to have a last look at its black tents and grazing camels, I need not relate at length. Yet each incident of that time is fresh in my mind with pleasant memories ; and each one tells of what was, and what might have been, but is not. Well ; we crossed the great Mesopotamian plain, once so thickly peopled, they say, now so lonely, till we fell in with the Euphrates at Heet ;¹ the river was fordable at this point, and we crossed it without difficulty. We then followed its course by marsh and desert, down to Samowa,² and, a little further,

¹ An Arab village, near the supposed site of Babylon.

² A town on the lower Euphrates, at about half-distance between Bagdad and Basrah.

came to a thriving village called Showey'rat, situated by a canal that branched off from the main river, and an ordinary market-resort of the Bedouins in the neighbourhood. Here we halted, and waited tidings of the expected caravan.

"Two days we rested; the villagers, for whom a visit from rovers of the Benoo-Riah was no novelty, gave us welcome and shelter, and discreetly asked no questions. Meanwhile Ja'ad rode away to an encampment of the Mountefik Bedouins,¹ at some hours' distance, in search of news.

"The third morning he returned, and gave us the wished-for intelligence. The Sheybane caravan, with the Emeer Daghfel at its head, would pass a good way off westward of Showey'rat in the course of the next day. On hearing this, we, that is, Moħarib, Ja'ad, Ĥarith Ĥoweyrith, Doheym and myself, went out together among the dry hillocks beyond the village walls, and there held long counsel. After much discussion of the when and how, it was resolved that we should set forth on a cross track that very night.

"Eagerly as I had longed for this decisive moment, I felt, now that it was really near, a seriousness, a sober-

¹ A numerous and powerful tribe which still frequents these parts.

ing, so to speak, of my whole self, body and mind, that I had never felt before. It was not hesitation, though what the result of the next day's daring might be no one could tell; still less was it fear, though I knew that myself and every man of us held his life in his hand; it was cool absolute resolve; it was the strain of being in deadly earnest. All the possible consequences came mustered before me in one glance, and I dared them all. Now or never; win her I would, or die at her feet. Even her risk—and, ah! it was really much more serious than my selfish love imagined—seemed swallowed up in my own great resolution. While life was in me, no harm should approach her; if I perished—but this thought I was unable to follow up further. And it was well so; nothing else could have unnerved my arm or chilled my heart, but apprehension for her; and that, fortunately for myself, I did not realize; it was like a thing impossible. Hope ruled the hour; and as the day declined, my spirits rose, till I had need of more than common self-control to wait the tardy night, and the signal for starting.

“Well do I remember that afternoon at Showey’rat, when we had returned from the outside hillocks, our deliberation over, and all determined and settled. Most of our band had dispersed themselves, to wander till evening should come, here and there in the streets of the village, chaffering, loitering, or sleeping. Moharib and

I, followed by Aman only, had gone aside into a mud-walled garden inclosure by the canal; the ground within was overrun with great green melon-plants; palms and fruit-trees grew as chance, seemingly, had planted them; one whole side of the place was occupied by a vineyard, loosely trailed along high perches, or clinging to the tree-stems near. The sun still flamed high in the dark blue heaven of the south; but the leaves of plant and tree, water-fed from the neighbouring canal, though dust-powdered, were vigorous and fresh; there was no sign of drooping in their abundant verdure.

“ Sheltered from the burning heat by a vine-canopy of half-transparent green, Moḥarib and I lay stretched, with ripe bunches of white grapes hanging above and around us, pleasant to eye, taste, and smell. Indeed, Aman’s enjoyments were, I think, bounded by the alternate eating of grapes, and of a huge water-melon, from which he had already cut some considerable slices, and kept on cutting more. Thus occupied, he paid little attention to us, or to anything else, perfectly satisfied with present pleasure. Perhaps, the unreflecting mind is, on the whole, the happiest of all.

“ But Moḥarib and I, now seated, now reclined, under the warm green shade, left grapes and melons untouched on their stalks. Our feast was in the talk of that nearest the heart of each,—of love past and love to come—till

remembrance and anticipation almost equalled actual presence. I told my story—the story you now know—recalling to view every happy scene, every fair picture, in its own bright colour, heightened by the prismatic hues of fond remembrance; and in every picture, every scene, she was the centre figure, the source of all beauty and joy around, the light of life.

“Then Moharib took up the word, and related with all the eloquence that a lover’s tongue and a lover’s heart can supply, his own tale of love. He spoke of the girl whom first he met when, a lad of barely twelve, he had gone accompanying his mother on a visit to her acquaintances in a neighbouring encampment of the Benoo-’Adra’ tribe. He described her perfect beauty, her simple kindliness, her unadorned grace; he told his own feelings, the first dawn of love, the few words exchanged, the smile at parting; the subsequent loneliness of the return homewards to the tents of Benoo-Riah. He told how their mutual affections, hers and his, kindled that day in the valley of Soley,¹ grew and strengthened by frequent meetings at well, or on pasture-ground, till it attracted the notice of unfriendly kinsmen on either side; the opposition of parents, the jealousy of rivals. He told of the barriers that spite and envy attempted to

¹ Between Nejd and Yemen.

raise up between her and him ; the efforts made to shake her constancy ; and, these failing, the devices used to trick him into the belief that she had ceased to care for him ; while he all the while knew well, with the certainty that answered love alone can give, that her love equalled his, or exceeded ; and that it was the love which can be quenched by death alone, nor even by death.

“ Thus he went on, dwelling lingeringly on every circumstance, reviewing every outward or inward memory, his and hers ; and suffusing all with the purple halo of deep love, till he came to their last meeting by the well of Jowfa¹ in the early spring of the year ; the pledges they interchanged, the vows they spoke, the tears they shed, the embrace, the parting look, the threats of their kinsfolk, their own unalterable resolve.

“ ‘ An old story, Ahmed, brother,’ said he ; ‘ but ever new ; mine as yours, yours as mine. Hear then my tale, and take it for your own ; my grief is your grief ; my pain your pain ; my hope your hope. True love is one only, and has but one voice as one heart.’ So saying, he leant his back against the vineyard wall, and sang :—

“ ‘ It cannot be, it cannot be
That I should gain by losing thee.
They threat, hey promise much, but all
Their threat is weak, their promise small.

¹ On the frontier of Kaseem, near Nejd.

What were my loss, so thou be won ?
Or what my gain, if thou art gone ?
What can the gathered world supply
Of bliss, if thou no more be nigh ?
Where shall I find the love that erst
Made earth a heaven ? that love, the first,
The only love, the ecstasy.

I knew not whether mine or thine ;
For I was thou, and thou wert I,
Two tangled life-threads, one the twine :—
It cannot be, it cannot be,
That I should gain by losing thee.'

“ He paused ; then went on with his song :—

“ ‘ It cannot be, it cannot be
That I should gain by losing thee.
Were all the love that ever glowed
In all men’s hearts on thee bestowed ;
Of every mine were every gem
For thee wrought in one diadem ;
Of every realm were every throne
Step to thy feet, and thine alone,—
The total value of the earth
Were nothing to thy single worth.
For thine the unsullied pearl of youth,
The treasure of a faithful heart ;
And thine the crown of changeless truth,
And these are thine, and these thou art :—
It cannot be, it cannot be
That I should gain by losing thee.’

“ Again he paused ; then resumed in a voice almost

broken by the intensity of longing passion, as though striving to reach what he could neither express nor attain :—

“ ‘ It cannot be, it cannot be
That I should gain by losing thee.
Life is no life if thou remove,
And death no death if in thy love.
Oh, sundered far, yet ever near
Thy form I see, thy voice I hear ;
By trackless waste, o'er far hill-line,
Thy gentle hand is laid in mine ;
Warm to my lips thy lips are pressed,
Clasped in thy arms my nightly rest ;
And health, and wealth, and name, and fame,
And heaven's own hopes, and God's own bliss,
I'd give them all, nor blame nor shame,
For thy one smile, for thy one kiss :—
It cannot be, it cannot be—
Whate'er I lose, I lose not thee !

“ He ended, but remained seated as he was, gazing before him into distance, saying nothing. I too was silent : each of us had his own thoughts ; and the thoughts of each were, in likelihood, much the same.

“ ‘ Enough,’ at last I broke in ; ‘ lose her we will not, by God's help, neither I nor you. Only one thing, my brother, I conjure you ; tell me this : How I can help you in attaining the desire of your heart, as you are now helping me. Be sure I will stand by you to the utmost,

and never fail you ; it is the least that I can do in your requital, and God to witness above us both.'

" 'You speak as you would perform, and generously,' he answered. 'But, Ahmed, have no care ; she and I shall soon, without help of friends, have reached what we long for, where we shall stand in need of nothing but the favour of the One, the Merciful.'

" 'How can that be ?' I asked. " 'What do your words mean ?'

" 'They mean,' he replied, 'that when you are happy in the possession of her you love, all I ask of you is to remember your brother who died to win for you that which he could not attain for himself.' Then, after a short silence, 'My brother,' said he, 'my hour is come, and I know it ; I shall never return alive from the expedition on which we set out to-night. But when in after-days you revisit the place that is already prepared for me, and the heap of stones that will soon be piled over me, salute me by name, the brother of Leyla, the lover of Hafsah, and wish me peace. I shall hear you, though I make no answer. She too will visit me, and will be with me before long.'

" 'I thought him wandering in his mind. 'My brother,' I said, 'this is mere fancy, idle dreams ; let them go. Each of us has his appointed time, but God alone knows it. May He grant you a long life, and to find

what you seek. Neither you nor I are the first who have loved; and why should you be less fortunate than so many others have been?’

“‘She asked my promise,’ he answered, ‘and I gave it; she has called me, and I have answered; within two days it will be as I have said, nor would I have it otherwise. I am content with what has been decreed.’

“He was looking down on the ground while he spoke thus; when he had finished, he lifted up his face. I looked at it, and saw that it was flushed, burning red; his eyes shone so that I could not bear their glitter, and his breath was panting and thick. Then he stretched out his arms eagerly, as if to some one far off; but soon dropped them again, leant back in his place, raised his voice and sang,—

“‘O love! love! love! one hour to be
As once I was; one hour with thee,
My only love! when in thy smile
I knew my life, nor deemed the while
That ought could part my love from me!

‘O love! love! love! one hour to stand
As once we stood, when hand in hand
’Neath the lone palms,—and none was by
Our troth to see, but God’s own sky
In starry witness o’er the land.

'O love! love! love! one hour to rest,
Kisses to kisses, breast to breast;
Thy breast, thy kisses!—O my heart!
Be still; in life thou hast no part,
Of love so lightly dispossessed!

'O love! love! love! O loved in vain!
Too late the hope, too late the pain;
Too late! too late! O idle breath!
It may not be;—come life, come death,
Thou must, thou shalt be mine again!'

"With a sob that seemed as if body and soul had parted, he fell forward on his face to the ground. I went up to him, called him, took him by the arm, moved him, but to no purpose; he was insensible. Aman came to my help; we fetched water in haste from the deep stream running close outside the garden-wall, and poured it over his head and breast. After some time he opened his eyes. 'Leave me, my brothers,' he whispered in a voice only just audible, 'till the sun is down; then return.'

"We left him. I went into the village, and strayed about till the evening call,¹ when I entered the low, white-washed mosque, and said my prayers, somewhat to the surprise of the good folks of the place, who were unaccustomed to see a Bedouin, such as they took me

¹ The 'Idan, or call to prayer, immediately after sunset.

for, so accurate in his devotions. Aman and I then returned to the garden by the canal. There we found Moḥarib almost at the same spot where we had quitted him, but he took no immediate notice of our approach; he had spread his garment out on the dust, and was saying his prayers, standing, and making no prostration."

"The prayers of the dead, I suppose," observed Ṭaṭāwee; "may God have mercy on him. Yet I have known many who have said those very prayers under exactly the same impression, and then have lived comfortably for years after. Presentiments of this kind are quite as often false as true."

"In his case it was not so," answered Hermann; "he never said those prayers again,¹ nor any other stated ones. What, however, was the cause of his foreboding, and whence it came, I do not know; he said nothing to explain it, and I did not like to ask him."

"And you, Aḥmed, had you no similar anticipations at the time for yourself?" inquired Ṭaṭāwee, with a something ironical in the tone of his voice.

"None whatever," replied Hermann; "though if

¹ Mahometans, in their burial-prayer over the dead, make no prostration; the omission is intended to be significant of the coming resurrection. A man who expects shortly to die a violent death will not unfrequently recite these very prayers, as if over himself, by way of preparation or anticipation.

warnings like these were merely the creation of fear, conjecture, fancy, or what not, as some say, I might well then have experienced them. But no ; it is a feeling which one can no more conjure up in one's self at will, than ignore it when it really comes. It is a voice that we cannot make speak by hearkening for it ; so too neither can we help hearing it when it does speak, only the speaker remains unknown and hid."

"You are a superstitious young fellow," half-laughed the other ; "though I can hardly blame you for it : as a child you were probably educated to a belief in these things, and later circumstances seem to have confirmed you in it. Turks and Koordes are much given to these fancies ; so are Arabs and Bedouins though after a different fashion ; and associating with them as you have done, you, who are already over-imaginative of yourself, could scarcely fail to catch something of their turn of mind. But have a care, lad, and do not lay too much stress on presentiments, dreams, voices, and the like ; wiser men than you have been made fools of in this way before now."

"I do not pretend to understand these things," said Hermann ; "nor do I take them into account, or draw conclusions from them. But I cannot doubt the truth of what I have myself experienced, or seen experienced by others. It would be, I think, unreasonable to refuse

to our senses, in one particular class of objects, the credit which we allow them in the remainder. Who, or to what purpose the *hatif*¹ may be, I know not; but I find everywhere those who bear witness to his existence; and their testimony corresponds to what I have heard or felt in my own person. So too with presentiments, so with dreams. Besides, when real, they have a character of their own, even independently of the confirmation or meaning they may seem to receive from subsequent events—a character well-known to those who have felt their influence, but impossible to describe by words to those who have not.

“Why, indeed,” continued he, “should we suppose our will and intelligence to be alone in their kind, or that the spiritual powers which we recognise in ourselves have no separate existence in other forms without us and around us? The appearances on which men’s belief in *hatif*, *Jinn*, and the like, in the occasional truth of a presentiment or a dream are based, are not less objective after their kind than are those of the stars now over our heads, and the masts and ropes beside us. Some might say that even these are illusions, modes of perception, and no more. Be it so: but in the meanwhile we must hold for reality that which is reality to us; and the

¹ “The Summoner” or banshee of the Arabs.

things of which we are speaking are real exactly in the same manner, though the ultimate base of their reality be not better known to us than that of everything else."

"All this may be true," replied the Egyptian; "but to me one thing is clear: that impressions of this kind, whether made through the mind or the senses, are merely exceptions, and meant to be regarded as such. They resist every attempt to bring them under rule and system, and belong to something that has no bearing on our normal and reasonable life. Here again the son of 'Abd-Allah,¹ was right in his summary rejection of them; though he too seems to have had occasional weaknesses, the consequence, probably, of early associations, in this respect.² But they who, like the magicians of my own country, profess to have them at command, are rank impostors. The invisible powers, whether spirits of the dead, or other, even if they do keep up now and then a kind of connection with the living, are certainly not at their beck. To profess the contrary is to be a knave, and to believe it, a fool.

"The subject, however, is a wide one," he added; "and if we once begin to discuss it in earnest, we shall

¹ The prophet Mahomet.

² "Ghosts, apparitions, and the like, have nothing to do with Islam," is an authentic saying of Mahomet's, who was, however, sometimes rather credulous, especially about omens.

make an end not of the night only, but of the day after too. So pray return to the course of your story."

"I would have done so before now," rejoined Hermann, "had not yourself introduced this topic, one which I for my part do not like to talk much about; it is an unhealthy one." He swallowed a draught of water from the pitcher on the deck, and resumed.

"When Moḥarib had ended his prayer, he took up his cloak, shook it, threw it over his shoulders, and then turned towards us with his ordinary look and manner, in which no trace of past emotion could be discerned. We all left the garden together; there was plenty of occupation for every one in getting himself, his horse, his weapons, and his travelling gear, ready for the night and the morrow. Our gathering-place was behind a dense palm-grove that cut us off from the view and observation of the village; there our comrades arrived, one after another, all fully equipped, till the whole band of twelve had re-assembled. The cry of the night prayers proclaimed from the mosque roof had long died away into silence; the last doubtful streak of sunset faded from the west, accompanied by the thin white crescent of the young moon; night, still cloudless, and studded with innumerable stars, depth over depth, reigned alone. Without a word we set forth into what seemed the trackless expanse of desert, our faces between west and

south, the direction across which the Emeer Daghfel and his caravan were expected to pass.

“More than ever did the caution now manifested by my companions, who were better versed than myself in adventures of the kind, impress me with a sense, not precisely of the danger, but of the seriousness, of the undertaking. Two of the Benoo-Riah, Harith and Moḍarrib, whom the tacit consent of the rest designated for that duty, took the advance as scouts, riding far out ahead into the darkness, sometimes on the right, sometimes on the left, in order that timely notice might be given to the rest of us, should any chance meeting or suspicious obstacle occur on the way. A third, Ja’ad es-Sabāsib himself, acted, as beseemed his name, for guide; he rode immediately in front of our main body. The rest of us held close together, at a brisk walking pace, from which we seldom allowed our beasts to vary; indeed, the horses themselves, trained to the work, seemed to comprehend the necessity of cautiousness, and stepped on warily and noiselessly.

“Every man in the band was dressed alike. Though I retained, I had carefully concealed my pistols; the litham¹ disguised my foreign features, and to any super-

¹ A fold of the head-dress, drawn across the whole lower face up to the eyes.

ficial observer, especially at night, I was merely a Bedouin of the tribe, with my sword at my side, and my lance couched, Benoo-Riah fashion, alongside of my horse's right ear. Not a single word was uttered by any one of the band, as, following Ja'ad's guidance, who knew every inch of the ground, to my eyes utterly unmeaning and undistinguishable, we glided over the dry plain. At another time I might perhaps have been inclined to ask questions, but now the nearness of expectation left no room for speech. Besides, I had been long enough among the men of the desert to have learnt from them their habit of invariable silence when journeying by night. Talkative at other times, they then become absolutely mute. Nor is this silence of theirs merely a precaution due to the insecurity of the road, which renders it unadvisable for the wayfarer to give any superfluous token of his presence; it is quite as much the result of a powerful, though it may well be most often an unconscious, sympathy with the silence of nature around.

"Silent overhead, the bright stars moving on, moving upwards from the east, constellation after constellation, the Twins and the Pleiads, Aldebaran and Orion, the Spread and the Perching Eagle,¹ the Balance, the once-

¹ "Lyra" in Western astronomy.

worshipped Dog-Star, and beautiful Canopus. I look at them till they waver before my gaze; and, looking, calculate by their position how many hours of our long night-march have already gone by, and how many yet remain before daybreak; till the spaces between them show preternaturally dark; and on the horizon below a false eye-begotten shimmer gives a delusive semblance of dawn; then vanishes.

"Silent: not the silence of voices alone, but the silence of meaning change, dead midnight. The Wolf's Tail ¹ has not yet shot up its first slant harbinger of day in the east; the quiet progress of the black spangled heavens is monotonous as mechanism; no life is there. Silence; above, around, no sound, no speech. The very cry of a jackal, the howl of a wolf, would come friendly to the ear, but none is heard; as though all life had disappeared for ever from the face of the land. Silent everywhere. A dark line stretches thwart before us; you might take it for a ledge, a trench, a precipice, what you will. It is none of these; it is only a broad streak of brown withered herb, drawn across the faintly gleaming flat. Far off on the dim right rises something like a black giant wall. It is not that: it is a thick-planted grove

¹ "Deneb Sirhān," the Arab name for the zodiacal light, very marked in these regions, especially towards autumn.

of palms ; silent they also, and motionless in the night. On the left glimmers a range of white ghost-like shapes : they are the rapid slopes of sandhills shelving off into the plain ; no life is there.

“Some men are silenced by entering a place of worship, a grave-yard, a large and lonely hall, a deep forest ; and in each and all of these there is what brings silence, though from different motives, varying in the influence they exert over the mind. But that man must be strangely destitute of the sympathies which link the microcosm of our individual existence with the macrocosm around us, who can find heart for a word more than needful, were it only a passing word, in the desert at night.

“Silent we go on ; the eyes and thoughts of the Bedouins are fixed, now on the tracks, for there are many, barely distinguishable to a few yards before them through the gloom ; now on the pebble-strewn surface beneath their horses’ hoofs ; at times on some bright particular star near the horizon ; while occasionally they turn an uneasy glance to right or left, as though half anticipating some unfriendly figure about to start out of the gloom. Moḥarib rode generally alongside of Ja’ad, with whom he exchanged, but not often, signs or low whispers ; Aman kept close to me. I, who had long before made a separate astral calculation for each

successive night in the year (a useful amusement in my frequent journeys), and for whom almost every star has a tale to tell of so many hours elapsed since sunset, so many remaining to the dawn, continue gazing on the vault above, also thinking. Our horses' pace never varies; no new object breaks the monotonous gloom of our narrow horizon; the night seems as though it had no end; we all grow drowsy, and go on as if in an evil dream.

"Aman draws from the loose breast-folds of his dress a small clay pipe. The elegant workmanship of the bowl, and the blue ornaments of its rim declare it to be of Moşool manufacture. Aided more by feeling than by sight, he proceeds deliberately to fill it from a large tobacco pouch, made of cloth, once gaily embroidered, now sadly stained and tarnished; carefully arranged the yellow 'Irak tobacco (the only quality obtainable south of Bagdad, and of which we had laid in the necessary store at Showey'rat), with the coarse broken stalks undermost, and the fine dust-like leaf particles for a covering above. Next, with a single blow on the flint, he strikes a light, lays it delicately on the top, replaces the wire-work cupola over the pipe's mouth, and smokes like a man who intends to make the most of his enjoyment, and who economizes his pleasure that it may last the longer.

“He is not long alone in this proceeding; for whether seeking a remedy against sleepiness, or ennui, or perhaps both, Musa’ab quickens his pace a little, and bringing his horse alongside of Aman’s asks for a light in his turn. But his pipe is not all for himself, Howeyrith claiming a share in it; whilst the negro, Shebeeb, considers his complexion sufficient warrant for taking a pull in company with Aman. I myself, though a minute before absent, or nearly so, from everything around in thought, am aroused from my reverie by the pleasant smell of the smoke, and ask also for a light, which Aman gives me. All the others, Ja’ad and Moharib alone excepted, follow the example.

“The night-air freshens, it blows from the east. Looking round somewhat backward on our left we see a faint yellow gauze of light, a spear-shaped ray; it is the zodiacal harbinger of the sun. It widens, it deepens—for brighten that dull ray does not—and the hope it permits of a nearer halt arouses us one and all from our still recurring torpor. The air grows cooler yet; the kaffeeyehs¹ are rearranged around each chin, and the mantles, some black, some striped, some dusky red, are wrapt closer to every form.

¹ Handkerchiefs, silk, cotton, or mixed, and generally of gay colours, worn largely by Bedouins for their sole head-covering.

"Suddenly, almost startling in that suddenness, the morning-star flashes up, exactly in the central base of the dim eastern pyramid of nebulous outline. Sa'ad, Doheym, Musa'ab, myself, all of us instinctively look first at the pure silver drop, glistening over the dark desert-marge, and then at Ja'ad, as though entreating him to notice it also, and to take the hint it gives. He rides on and makes no sign. Yet half an hour more of march; during which time the planet of my love¹ has risen higher and higher, with a rapidity seemingly disproportionate to the other stars; and through the doubtful twilight I see Harith and Modarrib, our night-long outriders, nearing and falling in with the rest of our party. They know we have not much further to go. Before us a low range of sand-heaps, already tinged above with something of a reddish reflect, on which the feathery ghaḍa² grows in large dusky patches, points out the spot where Ja'ad had determined hours before should be our brief morning rest. Once arrived among the hillocks, Ja'ad reconnoitres them closely, then draws rein and dismounts; we all do the same; I mechanically.

"The horses are soon picketed, one close by the other;

¹ "Zahra'," is the Arab name for the planet Venus, or morning-star.

² A kind of euphorbia, common in the Arabian desert.

there is no fear of vicious kicking or biting among these high-bred animals. Next, leaving only the cloths that have served for saddles on their backs, we lighten them of their remaining loads: an easy task; for except two pair of small water-skins, and a few almost empty saddle-bags, more tassel than contents, there is not much to relieve them of.

"Aman, thoroughly tired with the night's march, and little troubled by cares either for the future or the present, had quickly scooped away the soft cool sand into a comfortable hollow, arranged a heap of it for a pillow, and in half a minute lay there asleep and motionless like one dead. The other Benoo-Riahees did the same. Ja'ad and Moharib first made up for their previous abstinence by smoking each a half-filled pipe, then followed the general example. For a few minutes longer I sat, the unbidden watchman of the party, looking at them; sighed, looked again. Soon I felt my ideas growing confused, and hastily clearing away in my turn somewhat of the sand, took my saddle-bags, folded them, laid them under my head, and almost instantly fell into dreamless slumber.

"My sleep could not have lasted a full hour when with a shiver, so freshly blew the easterly breeze of the morning, I awoke. Rising, I drew round me the woollen cloak which had fallen away on one side, leaving me

partly uncovered in my uneasy though heavy sleep, and sat up. I looked about me, first at my comrades: they all lay yet slumbering, every one his spear stuck into the sand at his head, rolled up in their cloaks, some one way, some another; then at the narrow belt of sandhills among which we had alighted in the gloaming. They circled us in at forty or fifty yards distant on every side. The clear rays of the early sun entered the hollow here and there through gaps between the hillocks; but on most points they were still shut out, and the level light silvered rather than gilded the sand-margin around. Except my own, not an eye was open, not a limb stirred: the very horses were silent and motionless as their masters.

“‘Am I nearer to or further than ever from my hopes?’ said I to myself, as I gazed at the pure blue sky above me, the heaped-up sand below, the tufted ghaḍa on the slopes, the sleeping men, and the patient drooping horses; ‘and to what purpose is all this? Fool! and a fool’s errand!—no;—anyhow love is love, and life life: better to attempt and lose than never to attempt at all. Poor Moḥarib too, on a venture not his own! I wonder what his presentiments betoken; I feel none. No hint of to-day’s future or to-morrow’s. And she meanwhile—where is she at this very moment? near or far? and does she expect me now? has she any infor-

mation of our intent? any guess? and how shall I find her when we meet? But shall we indeed meet? and how? If this attempt fail, what remains? Lucky fellows,' thought I, with a look on the heavy-breathing Aman and Harith where they lay side by side. 'They at least have all the excitement of the enterprise without any of the distressful anxieties; or, rather, without that one great, miserable anxiety, what is the end?'

"While thus I sat and thought, the Bedouins awoke, Ja'ad first of all. One roused another; they rubbed their eyes, and looked staringly around them. Moħarib gave me the greeting of the morning, and added, 'We have not far to go now.' With scarcely a word, every one looked at his horse, and rearranged his travelling gear; the beasts were then unpicketed, and we remounted for our onward journey. A couple of hours before us, said Ja'ad, was a spring, where we could water our horses; there, too, I knew by former experience of like cases, we should make some kind of breakfast. Gladly I allow would I even now have prolonged the halt a few minutes longer for but a cup of coffee; this was, however, a luxury of which I well knew the idea must be renounced on a journey with Bedouins in the desert. So, in company with most of the others, I made a pipe do duty for what was of necessity omitted.

"After the time announced by Ja'ad, we came on

the promised spring of water; a scantily supplied pool amid a patch of short grass, through which the rock cropped out at intervals. The water was slightly brackish, and almost tepid; yet we drank of it eagerly, men and beasts. Here, too, we breakfasted on the remnants of bread brought with us from Showey'rat, seasoning them with dry dates. An hour more we rode on our way; henceforth over dry ground, patched in one place with whitish sand, in another with parched-up grass and scrub, and everywhere strewn with stones. No village walls, no field, no palm-grove, no sign of habitation or tillage was anywhere within sight; the desert-plain spread more and more barren; its level horizon widening out as we advanced.

“But when the sun was already more than half-way up the eastern sky, the attention of our whole party was arrested by a speck on the far-off horizon in front to our right. It moved; it gradually increased; it broke into several dark points; then united again, and seemed to increase every minute. ‘The Emeer’s caravan,’ whispered Moḥarib to me, as he came close to my side. My heart beat till I could scarcely draw my breath. ‘How do you know it?’ I said. ‘There was no other caravan about to come on that track,’ he answered; ‘besides, I can recognise the litters.’

“I strained and strained my gaze, but could make

out no particular objects in the moving outline. Only it was evident that if we remained where we were, the caravan would in less than an hour's time pass within a quarter of a mile from the spot.

“‘They are fifty or sixty spears,’ whispered Moḍarrib, the keenest-sighted of our band, to Ja’ad. ‘We cannot attack them by daylight.’ Moḥarib looked at me; ‘What do you say?’ he asked. ‘You are the best judges,’ I answered; ‘enough that they do not escape us.’

“‘This way, now,’ said Ja’ad, who had kept silence awhile, leading behind a rising ground to our left. There, sheltered from view, and without dismounting from our horses, we held a brief discussion, the chief point of which was, should we try our fortunes at once, or should we wait the night. Ḥarith, Doheym, and myself were for the former alternative; but Moḥarib, whose prudence equalled his courage, and the eight others, decided for the latter. In fact, I myself soon perceived that in open fight, man to man, we must have the worse of it; they were five to one, and we could by daylight have no advantage, not even that of surprise, to counterbalance such odds. Yet had not this been a last chance I think that I should have insisted on making an attempt; but the knowledge that loss if incurred would be irreparable, and the thought of the

risk which Zahra' must, in such an event undergo, held me back.

“‘Their evening halt will be at the waters of Doneyyib,’ said Ja’ad. ‘That will suit us admirably,” answered Moḥarib; ‘I know the place; and we can easily arrange our ambush. Let Ḥarith remain behind with the rest.’

“It was agreed accordingly : Ja’ad, Moḥarib, Doheym, and myself, with Aman, who would not leave me, were to go forward, while Ḥarith and the six others stayed where they were, till the Emeer Daghfel and his men should be fairly out of sight, then follow the track as far as the Theneeyah,¹ half an hour’s distance from Doneyyib, and there wait in reserve.

“This point settled, Ja’ad, myself, and our three companions resumed our route, but very cautiously, and on a line parallel with the caravan, which we desired to retain just in sight, and on no account to approach. By Moḥarib’s suggestion we reversed our lances, turning their points backwards and downwards, after the manner of the Shomer Arabs; while Ja’ad, who had reassumed his post of guide, availed himself, with Bedouin tact, of every inequality of the ground, every wind-heaped sand-ridge, every bush of feathery ghaḍa, every circum-

¹ A defile, or narrow winding road between hills.

stance of earth and air, to mask our number and our real direction. At times, when the Emeer's party seemed likely to come too near, we halted altogether; then went on again.

"I knew she was there, and knew also that the moment was not yet; but I could not refrain from constant gazing towards the slow-winding specks on the westerly horizon, as though I had been uncertain of her being among them, or as if my looking was of any use then and there. Once, when the space between us was at the narrowest, I could just make out the crimson hangings of the camel-carried litters, in one of which she must be. O God, how I longed to break through all delay, put my horse to full speed, shout to my comrades 'follow,' and rush on the caravan, though guarded not by sixty but six hundred lances and swords. But I restrained myself, or rather Moḥarib's look and gesture restrained me. Would it had not! Come what might have, it would have been better for me, for her. But now—"

Hermann broke off. "Keep up, my dear, dear fellow," said Tanṭawee; "bear a brave heart. Regret and self-reproach in things like these is mere folly, and despair is cowardice. All was for the best, I doubt not; all may yet, will, I hope, be well."

His friend smiled a sad smile, and shook his head.

Then with a long-drawn sigh ; " God only knows," he said. " His we are, and to Him we all return. But this is idle ; I will complete my tale.

" We circled aside ; the caravan kept its way, and again became a mere speck on the desert rim. They had taken no notice of us. Silently, cautiously, we followed.

" The sunbeams were low and yellow, and our shadows stretched long and distorted over the ground, when we saw the object of our pursuit gradually leading off more on the right.

" " They have made up their minds to halt for the night at the waters of Doneyyib ; it is what we wanted," whispered Moharib to me. ' How is your heart, my brother ?'

" My answer was by look, not by words. Doheym drew closer, and he and Moharib held some talk with Ja'ad, but in so low a tone that the meaning escaped me.

" " Now is the time," said Ja'ad, and added, turning to Aman, ' Caution, my black brother, caution.' Then turning his horse's head to the right, he made us a sign to follow.

" " Where are we going next ? is it now ?' I thought, so far as the excitement I was in allowed me to think. But I asked no question. Briskly, yet more warily than

ever, Ja'ad wound in and out amid sand-heaps and bushes, slopes and hollows, till I for one had wholly lost every idea of the way; though of this I took no note: my only care now was to reach the goal, and then—happen what might. So on we rode in silence, keeping close at our guide's heels for an hour or more, till the long blurred shadows faded away, and the steely grey of the sky overhead showed that the sun had set.

“Then Ja'ad slackened his horse's pace to a slow walk; and we all went noiselessly following behind a long, steep bank, till we reached a spot where the meeting sand-drifts left behind them only a kind of trench, about thirty feet in depth. So hidden, so seemingly low was the place, that one suddenly brought there might have fancied himself absolutely out of the world. Here Ja'ad halted, listened awhile, then dismounting threw his horse's halter without a word to Doheym. We all alighted. Some whispering followed between Ja'ad and Moħarib; after which the latter made me a sign to remain where I was. I obeyed. Ja'ad took in hand Moħarib's horse, and sat down close by, holding the halter, speechless and motionless. We all did the same.

“But Moħarib, removing his head-dress, strewed his dark hair thickly over with earth-grey sand; then took off his cloak also, and laid it on one side. Next, gently

and circumspectly, he began climbing on all fours up the opposite bank, till he had reached its upper margin. There he stopped, and for a minute or two peered over the edge ; stooped again and redescended into the hollow not less cautiously than he had mounted. When at the bottom he shook the sand from his head, resumed his cloak and kaffeeyeh, and came up to where I sat.

“ ‘The Benoo-Sheyban are encamped within bow-shot of the bank,’ he said. ‘We guessed that they would halt hereabouts, but did not expect to find them so near ; further off would have been safer for us. However this is our opportunity ; and we must make the better use of it. Take off your kaffeeyeh, and climb up the slope where I did just now ; only have a care when at the top to show as little of yourself as possible above it. You can then get a good look at the tents, right in front of you ; and you will easily be able to distinguish the particular tent of the Sheykh’s daughter ; it is alongside of the tents of her maids and the other women, somewhat towards the left of the encampment. Fix it, and the way leading to it, well in your mind, that you may have no difficulty in finding it again in the dark. The Emeer Daghfel’s tent is in the middle ; and most of the men are close by it. But do not remain too long looking, or some one may see you and give the alarm.’

“Gently, gently, I crawled up the bank, using every

precaution that I had observed Moharib do before me ; but when I was just below the top, my heart palpitated with such violence that its beatings might have been audible to any one near ; a mist came over my eyes ; my head swam round, and I almost loosened my hold on the thin grass tufts by me. If I had let them go, I should have rolled back into the hollow. However with a strong effort I steadied myself, and waited thus a few moments till my calmer sense returned ; then raised my head up to the margin and looked over.

"Immediately before me was a wide patch of reddish sand ; further off on one side I noticed a sort of depression, with some bushes growing about it ; these indicated the waters of Doneyyib, the presence of which rendered this spot a favourite halt on the southward route. Behind the sand extended a tract of darker ground, scantily patched with dry herbage, and on it stood the Benoo-Sheyban tents, pitched in a double row. They were eleven in all, six in front and five behind ; the latter were from my point of view, partly covered, but not concealed, by those before them.

"Third in the front row to the left stood the Emeer's tent : it was readily distinguishable from the rest by its size, and by two long and tasselled spears stuck into the earth near the entrance. The remaining five tents on the same line also belonged to men : each was partly

open, and had a spear planted at the door. Of the five ranged behind, two more were occupied by men, as was evident from the manner in which they had been pitched, and from the spears beside them.

“Three tents stood on the right, side by side; and these all were appropriated to women. I knew it by the care taken to fence them about, and to protect their indwellers from curious or even casual gaze. In one of these three must be *Zahra*’. Again my head grew giddy, my eyesight dim. I thought, I hoped, I feared, I wished every instant that she herself might appear from out one of them. But though while I gazed and gazed, three or four veiled figures of women passed and repassed among the tents, now entering, now coming out, that one figure did not show itself. Had it been otherwise I believe that an involuntary cry, the utterance of irrepressible desire, would have betrayed me on the spot. It was ordained otherwise; unheard, unseen, unsuspected, I held my watch.

“Now, however, my whole attention was directed to make sure which of the three tents was that of *Zahra*’. It was the centre one; the glimpses of red and fringed curtains lining it, seen through and beneath the outer covering, and the frequent entrance and exit of women as if on errands of service, and in particular of one dusky unveiled face, that of a slave girl, probably the *Emeer*’s

gift to his betrothed, indicated it to my eye. But even had there been no such token to distinguish it, I should certainly have recognised it all the same: my heart would have told me what my eyes did not."

"Indeed!" ironically interposed Tanṭawee.

"Love, and you will understand," rejoined Hermann; then continued—

"Sure now of my goal, I next carefully studied the path that was to conduct me thither. Accordingly I fixed in my mind the directions in which the tent-ropes were stretched, and how I might avoid stumbling over them; noted well the openings of the tents themselves; and determined by what way I could, with least likelihood of discovery, get round behind the encampment to that tent which—oh happiness!—I was to enter that night. No doubt to my anxious comrades below it must have seemed that I remained up there much longer than was either prudent or needful; and in fact I believe that I protracted my gazing more than another would have done; yet the whole survey took me then less time to make than it does now to recount.

"At last I descended; and Aman, who was to take part in the adventure some hours later, also scrambled up the bank, though at another point, and had a look at the camp in the gathering dusk. Meanwhile Ja'ad and Doheym waited below with the horses. When Aman had

rejoined us, we moved off noiselessly all five for a good quarter of a mile down by the trench-like valley, till we had put a safe distance between the encampment and ourselves; then we halted, picketed our horses, and sat down to hold a last council.

“Would it be possible in one way or other to apprise her we came to seek of our presence, before actually making the attempt that night? No; that could not be done. We must make our arrangements independently of her knowledge as yet. So it was settled that Ja’ad, who was the only one thoroughly acquainted with this neighbourhood, should without delay go and find out the remaining seven of our party, who would be by this time arrived at the Theneeyah, and bring them on here. We would then all wait together till the moon had set, and even later, to allow full time for every one belonging to the Sheybanee caravan to have gone to sleep. This would probably be before midnight.

“When all was still, we five, accompanied by the mulatto Harith, whose strength and courage rendered him a person of much importance on an occasion like this, would return to the sand-hollow by the camp; leaving the other six at the Theneeyah, to cover our escape and divert pursuers, if necessary. But of ourselves, two, namely Ja’ad and Doheym, should remain below in the hollow, holding the horses in readiness;

while Moḥarib, Ḥarith, Aman, and myself climbed up to the level on which the tents were pitched. There three should conceal themselves in waiting while I, by what means I could, entered the tent of Zahra' herself, roused her, and brought her along with me.

"Should all this be done, as we hoped, unobserved, our task was easy. Zahra' would mount Sekab, a powerful grey mare, given for this very purpose by the old Emeer Faris to Ḥarith, as the best rider of the party, when we set out from Tell-'Afr, Ḥarith would mount before, and we would rejoin our comrades at the Theneeyah. Then all together at full speed away; and before sunrise we should have entered the limits of the Shomer clan, where we were sure of shelter and protection. But if on the other hand we happened to be discovered during our attempt on the camp, we must fight for it, and win our way through as best might be. If pursuit were given, some would skirmish, and facilitate the flight of the rest.

"These things were settled on our way to and at the Theneeyah, before darkness had fully closed in. We then betook ourselves to our evening meal, of which we were much in need; the greater number of us having hardly tasted anything the livelong-day. Yet we did not dare to light a fire and prepare the customary cakes of bread, lest the glare, reflected by the smoke, should be-

tray us ; so we only mixed our coarse flour with the thick dingy water from the leathern bags, and made it into a kind of porridge, which we accompanied with dry and dirty dates. Had our repast consisted of the choicest delicacies of a Bagdad kitchen, or had it been of sand and pebbles, I do not think that I should have observed the difference.

“ The thin moon-crescent lowered and sank ; the stars came out, but not in the sharp clearness of the night before ; the smaller ones were hardly visible, and the larger had each around it a little ill-defined halo. ‘ There will be a mist before morning,’ said Moḥarib, who was weather-wise after a sort.

“ ‘ So much the better for us,’ answered Ja’ad. No one lay down to sleep ; we sat in groups, talking low and watching the stars.

“ Never had their dial appeared to me so slow ; but it moved on, and at last announced that midnight was near. Ḥarith pointed to the flying eagle,¹ which had now declined half-way to the horizon, and unfastened Sekab ; we, that is, the other five of his party, got our horses ready, and with an ‘ In the name of God,’ set out, Ja’ad leading as before. We reached the hollow. Not a sound was heard. Had the encampment been twenty miles

¹ “ Atair ” in European star-charts.

away, the quiet could not have been more complete. Softly we dismounted, Moharib, Harith, Aman, and I; gave our horses and our spears in charge of Doheym and Ja'ad; took off our cloaks and laid them on the sand; and in our under garments, with no arms but sword and knife, prepared ourselves for the decisive attempt.

"I did not think, I had no leisure to think, as we clambered up the loose bank, half earth half sand; the position required the fullest attention every moment; an incautious movement, a slip, a sound, and the encampment would be on foot, to the forfeit, not of my life, not of all our lives only—that I should have reckoned a light thing—but of my love also. One by one we reached the summit: before us stood the tents, just visible in dark outline: all around was open shadow, no moving figure broke the stillness, no voice or cry anywhere; nor did any light appear at first in the tents. The entire absence of precaution showed how unexpected was our visit: so far was well; my courage rose, my hope also.

"Following the plan we had agreed on, we laid ourselves flat on the sand, and so dragged ourselves forward on and on, hardly lifting our heads a little to look round from time to time, till we found ourselves near the front tent furthest on the left. No one had stirred without, and the tent itself was silent as a grave. Round it, and round the tent that stood next behind it we crawled

slowly on, stopping now and then, and carefully avoiding the getting entangled among the pegs and outstretched ropes. Above all, we gave the widest berth possible to what appeared in the darkness like four or five blackish mounds on the sand, and which were in fact guards, wrapped up in their cloaks and, fortunately for us, fast asleep.

“When we had arrived at the outside corner of the encampment, Harith stopped, and remained couched on the ground where the shade was deepest; it was his place of watch. Twenty or twenty-five paces further on Aman at my order did the same. Moḥarib accompanied me till, having fairly turned the camp, we came close behind Zahra’s tent, in which I now observed for the first time that a light was burning. Here Moḥarib also stretched himself flat on his face, to await me when I should issue forth from among the curtains.

“And now, as if on purpose to second our undertaking, arrived unsought-for the most efficacious help that we could have desired to our concealment. While crossing the sandy patch, I had felt on my face a light puff of air, unusually damp and chill. Looking up, I perceived a vapoury wreath, as of thin smoke, blown along the ground. It was the mist; and, accustomed to the desert and its phenomena, I knew that in less than half an hour more the dense autumn fog would have set in, veiling

earth and everything on it till sunrise. This time, however, the change in the atmosphere was quicker than usual; so that before I had well got behind the tent-range, the thickness of the air would hardly have allowed any object to be seen at a few yards' distance, even had it been daylight. As it was, the darkness was complete.

"Creeping forward, I gradually loosened one of the side pegs that made the tent-wall between the ropes fast to the ground. Through the opened chink a yellow ray shot forth into the fog; the whole tent seemed to be lighted up within. Hastily I reclosed the space, while a sudden thrill of dread ran through me; some maid, some slave might be watching. Or what if I had been mistaken in the tent itself? What if not she but others were there? Still there was no help for it now; the time of deliberation had gone by; proceed I must and I would, whatever the consequences.

"Once more I raised the goat's-hair hangings, and peeped in. I could see the light itself, a lamp placed on the floor in front, and burning; but nothing moved: no sound was heard. I crawled further on my hands and knees, till the whole interior of the tent came into view. It was partly covered with red strips of curtain, and the ground itself was covered with carpets. Near the light a low couch, formed by two mattresses one upon the

other, had been spread ; some one lay on it ;—O God ! *she* lay there !

“The stillness of the night, the hour, the tent, of her sleep, her presence, her very unconsciousness, awed, overpowered me. For a moment I forgot my own purpose, everything. To venture in seemed profanation ; to arouse her, brutal, impious. Yet how had I come, and for what ? Then in sudden view all that had been since that last night of meeting at Diar-Bekr, stood distinct before me ; more yet, I saw my comrades on their watch outside, the horses in the hollow ; I saw the morrow’s sun shine bright on our haven of refuge, on our security of happiness. Self-possessed and resolute again, I armed myself with the conscience of pure love, with the memory and assurance of hers, and entered.

“Letting the hangings drop behind me, I rose to my feet ; my sword was unsheathed, my knife and dagger were ready in my belt ; my pistols, more likely to prove dangerous than useful at this stage of the enterprise, I had left below with my horse. Then barefoot and on tiptoe, I gently approached the mattress-couch. It was covered all over with a thin sheet of silken gauze ; upon this a second somewhat thicker covering, also of silk, had been cast ; and there, her head on a silken rose-coloured pillow, she lay, quiet as a child.

“I can see her now”—thus continued Hermann,

gazing fixedly on the air before him, and speaking, not as though to his friend, but to some one far off—"I can see her even now. She was robed from head to foot in a light white dress, part silk and part cotton, and ungirdled; she rested half turning to her right side; her long black hair, loosened from its bands, spread in heavy masses of glossy waviness, some on her pillow, some on her naked arm and shoulder, ebony on ivory; one arm was folded under her head, the other hung loosely over the edge of the mattress, till the finger-tips almost touched the carpet. Her face was pale, paler, I thought, than before; but her breathing came low, calm, and even, and she smiled in her sleep.

"Standing thus by her side, I remained awhile without movement, and almost without breath. I could have been happy so to remain for ever. To be with her, even though she neither stirred nor spoke, was Paradise; I needed neither sign nor speech to tell me her thoughts; I knew them to be all of love for me,—love not rash nor hasty, but pure, deep, unaltered, unalterable as the stars in heaven. It was enough; could this last, I had no more to seek. But a slight noise outside the tent, as if of some one walking about the camp, roused me to the sense of where I was, and what was next to be done. I must awaken her; yet how could I do so without startling or alarming her?

"Kneeling softly by the couch, I took in mine the hand that even in sleep seemed as if offered to me, gently raised it to my lips, and kissed it. She slumbered quietly on. I pressed her fingers, and kissed them again and yet again with increasing warmth and earnestness. Then, at last becoming conscious, she made a slight movement, opened her eyes, and awoke.

"'What! you Ahmed!' she said, half rising from the bed; 'I was just now dreaming about you. Is it really you? and how came you here? who is with you? are you alone?' These words she accompanied with a look of love full as intense as my own; but not unmixed with anxiety, as she glanced quickly round the tent.

"'Dearest Zahra! sister! my heart! my life!' I whispered, and at once caught her in my arms. For a moment she rested in my embrace; then recollecting herself, the place, the time, drew herself free again.

"'Did you not expect me, Zahra?'" I added; 'had you no fore-knowledge, no anticipation, of this meeting? or could you think that I should so easily resign you to another?'

"The tears stood in her eyes. 'Not so,' she answered; 'but I thought, I had intended that the risk should be all my own. I knew you were on our track, but did not imagine you so near: none else in the caravan guessed anything. You have anticipated me

by a night, one night only; and—O God!—at what peril to yourself! Are you aware that sixty chosen swordsmen of Benoo-Sheyban are at this moment around the tent? Oh, Ahmed! oh, my brother! what have you ventured? Where are you come?”

“In a few words, as few as possible, I strove to allay her fears. I explained all to her; told her of the measures we had taken, the preparations we had made, the horse waiting, the arms ready to escort and defend her; and implored her to avail herself of them without delay.

“Calmly she listened; then, blushing deep; ‘It is well, my brother,’ she said; ‘I am ready.’ Thus saying, she caught up her girdle from the couch; and began to gather her loosened garments about her, and to fasten them for the journey. No sign of hesitation now appeared, hardly even of haste. Her eye was bright, but steady; her colour heightened; her hand free from tremor.

“But even as she stooped to gather up her veil from the pillow on which she had laid it, and prepared to cast it over her head, she suddenly started, hearkened, raised herself upright, stood still an instant, and then, putting her hand on my arm, whispered: ‘We are betrayed; listen.’

“Before she had finished speaking I heard a rustle outside, a sound of steps, as of three or four persons,

barefoot and cautious in their advance, coming towards the front of the tent. I looked at Zahra'; she had now turned deadly pale, her eyes were fixed on the curtained entrance; yet in her look I read no fear, only settled, almost desperate, resolution. My face was, I do not doubt, paler even than hers; my blood chilled in my veins. Instinctively we each made to the other a sign for silence, a sign, indeed superfluous in such circumstances, and remained attentive to the noise without. The steps drew nearer; we could even distinguish the murmur of voices, apparently as of several people talking together in an undertone, though not the words themselves. When just before the entrance of the tent, the foot-fall ceased; silence followed. The curtains which formed the door were drawn together, one a little overlapping the other, so as to preclude all view from the outside; but they were in no way fastened within; and to have attempted thus to close them at that moment would have been worse than useless.

"Zahra' and I threw our arms, she round me, I round her; and our lips met in the mute assurance, that whatever was to be the fate of one, should also be the fate of the other. But she blushed more deeply than ever, crimson-red: I could see that by the light of the lamp, which we longed to, but at that moment dared not, extinguish. Its ray fell on the door-hangings, outside

which stood those whom their entire silence, more eloquent than than words, proclaimed to be listeners and spies. Who they were, and what precisely had brought them there, and with what intent they waited, we could not tell.

“Half a minute—it could not have been more—passed thus in breathless stillness; it was a long half-minute to Zahra’ and me. At last we heard a sort of movement taking place in the group without; it seemed as though they first made a step or two forwards; then returned again, talking all the while among themselves in the same undertone; then slowly moved away towards the line of tents in front. No further sound was heard: all was hushed. Zahra’ and I loosed our hold, and stood looking at each other. How much had been guessed, how much actually detected, I could not tell; she, however, knew.

“‘Fly, Ahmed,’ she whispered; ‘fly! That was the Emeer himself. They are on the alert; you are almost discovered; in a few minutes more the alarm will be given throughout the camp. For your life, fly!’

“I stood there like one entranced; the horror of that moment had numbed me, brain and limb. And how could I go? Her voice, her face, her presence, were, God knows, all on earth to me. How then could I leave them to save a life valueless to me without them?”

“‘In God’s name,’ she urged, ‘haste. Your only hope, brother, lies in getting away from here quickly and unperceived; in the darkness you can yet manage it; tell me, how is it outside?’

“‘Thick mist;’ I answered: ‘it was coming on before I reached the tent.’

“‘Thank God,’ she said, with a half-sob of relief, and a tone the like of which I never heard before or after, ‘that it is has saved you; that has prevented your companions from being discovered. Dearest Ahmed, she continued, kissing me in her earnestness, ‘as you love me, for my sake, for your own sake, for both of us, fly—it is the only chance left.’

“‘Fly, Zahra’! Zahra’, my life!’ I answered, almost with a laugh; ‘fly! and leave you here behind; never.’

“‘As you have any love for me, Ahmed,’ she replied in a low, hurried, choking voice; ‘as you would not expose me to certain dishonour and death; as you hope ever to meet me again;—O Ahmed! my brother! my only love!—it is their reluctance alone to shame me by their haste while yet a doubt remains, that has screened you thus far;—but they will return. Alone, I shall be able to extricate myself; I shall have time and means;—but you;—oh, save yourself, my love; save me!’

“‘Dearest Zahra’,” replied I, pressing her to my breast; ‘and you? what will you do?’

“‘Fear not for me,’ she answered, her eye sparkling as she spoke. ‘I am Sheykh Asa’ad’s daughter; and all the Emeers in Arabia, with all Sheyban to aid, cannot detain me a prisoner, or put force on my will. God lives, and we shall meet again; till then take and keep this token.’ She drew a ring from her finger and gave it to me. ‘By this ring, and God to witness, I am yours, Aḥmed, yours only, yours for ever. Now ask no more: fly.’

“‘One kiss, Zahra.’ One, many; she was in tears; then, forcing a smile to give me courage; ‘Under the protection of the best Protector,’ she said, ‘to Him I commit you in pledge; Aḥmed, brother, love, go in safety.’

“What could I do but obey? As I slipped out between the curtains, I gave one backward look; I saw her face turned towards me, her eye fixed on me with an expression that not even in death can I forget; it was love stronger than any death. An instant more, and I was without the tent. That moment the light within it disappeared.”

Hermann dropped his voice, and put his hand up to his face. As he did so, the moonlight glittered on an emerald, set in a gold ring, on the little finger. Tanṭa-wee looked at it.

“That is the ring, I suppose, Aḥmed Beg,” he said.

"I have often noticed it before; and she, I hope, will see it yet again one day, and know it for your sake; so take heart, brother, perhaps the day is nearer than you think."

"She will recognise it on me," answered Hermann, in a low sad voice, "either alive or dead; it will remain with me to the last, though if there be hope in it, I know not." Then he added, "She has no like token from me; I did not then think of offering any; nor did she ask; there was no need."

Both were silent. After a few minutes, during which the plashing of the quick waves against the bows of the ship was the only sound heard, Hermann resumed.

"Issuing from the tent, I came at once into the dense mist; through its pitchy darkness no shape could be discerned at ten yards of distance. Instinctively, for I was scarcely aware of my own movements, I crept to where Moḥarib lay crouched on the ground, and touched him; he looked up, half-rose and followed. Passing Aman and Ḥarith, we roused them too in their turn; there was no time for question or explanation then, all knew that something had gone wrong, but no one said a word. Nor was there yet any sign around us that our attempt had been perceived; no one seemed to be on the alert or moving. I began almost to hope that the sounds heard while in the tent might have been ima-

ginary, or, at least, that suspicion, if awakened, had by this time been quieted again.

“But only a few paces before we reached the brink of the hollow, something dark started up between it and us, and I felt myself touched by a hand. I leapt to my feet; and while I did so a blow was aimed at me, I think with a knife. It missed its intent, but ripped my sleeve open from shoulder to elbow, and slightly scratched my arm. At the same moment Harith’s sword came down on the head of the figure now close beside me; it uttered a cry and fell.

“Instantly that cry was repeated and echoed on every side, as if the whole night had burst out at once into voice and fury. We ran towards the hollow. When on its verge, I turned to look back a moment; and even through the thick mist could see the hurry and confusion of dark shapes; while the shout, ‘Sheyban!’ ‘Help, Sheyban!’ ‘Help, Rabee’ah!’ rose behind, around, coming nearer and nearer, mixed with the tramp of feet. ‘Quick! quick!’ exclaimed Harith; we rolled down rather than descended into the hollow; there stood Ja’ad and Doheym, ready by the horses, who, conscious of danger, neighed and stamped violently: but before we could mount and ride, the enemy was upon us.

“How many they were I could not distinguish; the only thing certain was, that we were surprised and out-

numbered. As our assailants poured down upon us from the steep sides of the gully, they raised a shout, a yell rather, enough to unnerve any but desperate men; that however were we, and thanked them for the outcry that revealed to us the direction of their attack, which would otherwise have been in great measure concealed from us by the fog and the darkness. We for our part returned no answer, uttered no cry; but while we struggled to get on our horses, struck out, each at what was nearest to him; we had perceived that those we had at the moment to deal with were on foot, and that, consequently, we, if once in the saddle, were sure of escape, at any rate, for the present.

"I struck down a Sheybanee who came between me and my horse; put my hand on the saddle-bags, felt that the pistols were in them, and was on the point of vaulting on the animal's back, when another fellow grappled me hand to hand. Warding his blows the best I could, I tried to draw out one of my pistols, when I received from somewhere a cut over the head, that glanced without going deep, but made a wide gash in the skin, and covered my face with blood. I staggered, then collected my strength, dashed my opponent to the ground, grasped the mane of my horse, sprang on him and galloped off, bleeding, but not seriously hurt. Ja'ad had already cleared his way. Moḥarib and Aman, the former con-

siderably cut about the arms and shoulders, extricated themselves at the same time that I did. Harith, who, like Aman and myself, was only scratched, followed close; Doheym alone, poor lad, remained behind; he had received his death-blow, and those bright eyes of his were dimmed for ever.

"We, however, had no time for mourning or revenge; all down the dark valley the clamour of the night seemed to increase and gather rather than diminish; and we were sure that in short space the Sheybanee horse would be full on our pursuit. Away we went till we entered the Theneeyah, and in its narrow defile found our six comrades, awaiting us ready mounted, and their spears in their hands. They had been already apprised by the clamour of what had happened, and were overjoyed to see now that one only of our band was missing. We were now eleven men in all; but the number of the enemy was, out of question, much greater; so that no alternative remained except flight, while flight was yet available. Sooner or later an unequal fight would probably have to be tried; but we reserved its chances for our last resort.

"Two hours of darkness were left, and we made the best of them, urging our beasts to their fullest speed; but unable to get out of reach of the ominous sound of horses' hoofs, halloas, and 'Ah! Sheyban!' 'Ah! Ra-

bee'ah!' in our rear. Dawn stole on, turning the dense gloom around to confused milky light, all too soon; for we perceived that our jaded horses, scantily fed and over-worked of late, were gradually slackening their pace; while our freshly-mounted pursuers kept gaining on us more and more, though the mist curtain, now an impenetrable veil of reflected shine, concealed them from sight.

"This advantage was now, however, to be withdrawn, leaving us to our own unequal resources. The sun had risen unperceived; but soon the heat of his beams penetrated that dense vapour; it thinned, broke into rolling drifts here and there, then scattered in light curls, and vanished as suddenly as it had at first come on. Open around us lay the brown shelterless desert, streaked with long lines of yellow, and meagrely spotted over with dry, stunted shrub; to right and left neither tree nor hill broke the hopeless monotony of the horizon. Only far, far away in front, stretched a low black line; I recognized in it the appearance, well known to me now, of planted palm-trees.

"Those are the palm-groves of Sook;¹ if we can

¹ Also called "Sook-esh-Sheyookh," a large Arab village on the right bank of the Euphrates, not many miles above the junction of that river with the Tigris at Korneh.

once reach them, we are safe,' said Moḥarib, who was riding at my side.

"'How far off are they?' I asked.

"'Four hours yet,' was the answer.

"'Shall we be able to get there?'

"'God knows.'

"Behind us, and now close upon us, came the Sheybanees, twenty in number, with shout, taunt, and yell, brandishing their spears in the certainty of soon overtaking us. Their horses were fresh, and the riders evidently confident of an easy victory; their swords hung by their sides; most had daggers too, but no fire-arms. All wore the ordinary long Bedouin shirt; and a few had on in addition coats of mail and light iron helmets. Each man had drawn the end of his head-dress tight across the lower part of his face so as to be scarcely recognisable, and peered at us with narrow wolfish eyes, eager for blood.

"Conspicuous among the rest was a stout, black-browed, black-eyed, clear-complexioned youth, wearing beneath his armour a red silk dress, and on his head a gay silk handkerchief, crimson and yellow, fastened about by a thick many-folded band of brown camel's hair; the lance he held was tassel-hung; the scabbard and sword-hilt at his side were gilt; he was mounted on a light bay horse; what could be seen of his features bore to my eye

a strange but distinct resemblance to her from whom I had so lately parted.

“‘It is the Emeer Daghfel himself. He is riding his horse, El-Ashkar;¹ what can he have done with his mare Dahma²?’

“‘She is the better of the two,’ observed Shebeeb.

“‘I looked at my rival, with what thoughts you can imagine. He, however, had not recognized me as yet, but I felt certain that he must soon do so, and then one or other of us would remain on the field; perhaps both. I resolved to be beforehand with him.

“‘But the sudden check which I gave to my horse’s bridle betrayed my intention to Moharib.

“‘Are you mad, Ahmed Agha?’ he exclaimed. ‘If you attack him so, you are lost; he is a practised spearman, and you are none; besides, he is mounted on El-Ashkar, fresh and vigorous, while the horse you are on is half lame. Go on straight before you; I know all the tricks of skirmishing, and I will check the pursuit while you get off.’

“‘Harith overheard us.

“‘Not you, Moharib,’ he said. ‘I am the older and the more skilled. I will try my lance first.’

“‘With this he turned, and shouting, ‘Hurrah for Riaḥ,

¹ “The Bay.”

² “The Black.”

Hurrah for 'Adwan! I am Aboo-Nefeesah,¹ and he who does not know me, let him learn me now!' rode towards the Sheybanees, quivering his spear as he advanced. Three horsemen darted forward from the enemy's ranks to accept the challenge. Meanwhile the flight and pursuit slackened, then stopped altogether; either party reined in; it was impossible to refrain from looking on.

"Wheeling hither and thither, now seated upright on his horse, now bending down all along on its back, or over the side, Harith kept his adversaries, three though they were, at bay, making and eluding more spear-thrusts than I could count. It seemed more like a playful trial of horsemanship than a real and deadly conflict; till after many minutes had thus passed, the Riahee, suddenly crossing the line of one assailant, drove his lance right through him from side to side; then drew it out, looked closely at the dripping point, and exclaimed, 'Done for!' while the wounded man reeled, fell to the ground, and, with a few short struggles, lay still and lifeless.

"With a louder 'Hurrah for 'Adwan!' Harith returned to the charge. But while with outstretched lance he pursued the simulated flight of one of the remaining Sheybanees, the other, coming up at full speed from

¹ Bedouins often take their patronymic from a daughter, as town Arabs from a son.

behind, aimed a sword-blow at his head. Harith was aware of it, and swerved aside, but not enough to escape the keen edge of the weapon, which caught his leg just above the knee, and almost severed it. Yet before he dropped from his horse, the mulatto, exclaiming, 'Blow for blow! I am Aboo-Nefeesah!' had cleft the enemy's skull, through iron cap and bone down to the eye-brows. Both rolled on the sand together, one dead, the other dying, till the third Sheybaneë riding up, put an end, with a spear-thrust, to Harith's courage and life.

"Neither side could now be held in any longer. 'Come on, dogs of Riah!' shouted the Sheybanees. 'Polite language, men of Rabee'ah!' was our answer; and we dashed against each other like counter-currents of the sea. We were now ten, they eighteen; and though they were better mounted and in part better armed than we, the combat did not seem so wholly unequal; nor was it the first time that Benoo-Riah had to fight against odds. Besides, the palm-groves of Sook, our nearest refuge, were still a mere dark streak on the horizon, and we could never hope to reach them without a trial of strength to the utmost; better then have it out at once; it was our fairest chance. As for me, I was wholly wild, reckless of others, reckless for myself. The remembrance of Zahra' herself did not soothe or soften me now. Behind me was bitter disappointment; around me blood and

death; before me all was blank, tinged with one hue only—the ferocity of mere despair.

“With taunt, threat, cheer, cry, we rushed on, each man singling out his antagonist. Then we turned, doubled, charged, retreated, charged again, till the dust rose on all sides like battle-smoke, and the plain resembled some thronged meydan¹ on a festival, full of jereed players; only that here, instead of palm-sticks, were sharp spears and keen-edged swords, bright at first, soon dulled with blood; the sands too reddened beneath.

“Howeyrith, Ja’ad, Moḍarrib, and the rest fought well; the Benoo-Sheyban too made good their title to their old name of ‘Arākim.’² The leaders on our side, now that Ḥarīth had fallen, were Moḥarib and Ja’ad; the Emeer Daghfel, with a brother and an uncle of his, headed the hostile clan. For myself, giving myself wholly up to the one only distinct feeling that now remained to me—deadly hate, I made straight through the confusion for

¹ The open space within or in the immediate vicinity of every Turkish or Arab town; it serves as a promenade on festival days, a place for horse-exercise, especially in the well-known game of “jereed,” or “palm-stick,” a kind of Eastern tournament, and so forth.

² “The banded vipers,” a surname given this tribe in pre-Islamitic times.

Daghfel. My fashion of riding, the pistols at my belt, my face, browned indeed, with exposure, but unlike in feature to the customary face of the desert, soon announced me for whom I was to the keen eyes of the enemy.

“‘The Bagdadee! the Bagdadee!’ was exclaimed on all sides. At that name I could see the scowl that darkened Daghfel’s face; the expression of my own was probably not more amiable. The Emeer shook his lance and pointed it towards me. I, however, had no intention of waiting his onslaught. He had, I was well aware, the superiority over me in the arms of his kind, but I was possessed of weapons to which he was unaccustomed, and for which he might be unprepared. So drawing a pistol, I fired it at my rival; but whether the resemblance he bore in my eyes to Zahra’ unnerved me, or whether it was the starting of my horse, I missed my aim; and the ball went wide of its mark. It was not wholly wasted though, for it penetrated the thigh of a ferocious-looking Sheybanee close by, breaking the bone, and throwing the man disabled from his saddle.

“The blue smoke curled in the faces of the Benoo-Sheyban, and a momentary confusion followed this introduction of new weapons into the fray; even the Emeer himself seemed for an instant to lose his presence of mind. Following up my advantage, I drew the second pistol from my belt and snapped it; no report came; the

priming had dropped out. Before I had time to remedy the defect, Daghfel was upon me. In a rage I threw away my now useless fire-arm; and, lance to lance, engaged in thrust and parry with my enemy. I strove hard to reach him near enough for a sword-blow, but could not.

“Armed in mail, he had more than once received with impunity the baffled point of my spear; and now, taking the offensive in his turn, was about to return my thrusts, with better and probably fatal aim, when a third person intervened between us; it was Moḥarib; his brandished lance quivered in the air; his eyes shot fire.

“‘I am Akhoo-Leyla¹!’ I am the champion of ’Adwan! I am the revenger of Ḥarith!’ he cried, as he rode at the Emeer of Sheyban, compelling him by the fury of his attack to let me alone, and to give his whole attention to this new enemy. Involuntarily, as it were, all the others drew back; the general conflict was stayed; the riders sat still on their saddles, I perforce, like the rest; a spell seemed to be cast over the field. Every eye was directed on the two combatants, unequal in age, but well matched for skill and courage: Daghfel was the stronger, but Moḥarib the more active. No one was, by tacit consent on either side, permitted to interfere;

¹ “The brother of Leyla.”

the wounded lay untended on the ground ; their horses ran wild over the plain.

“ For more than half-an-hour the duellists exhausted every effort, every artifice of spearmanship and horsemanship, each to gain of the other but one moment’s advantage, one single unguarded spot in steed or rider ; and still every thrust was turned aside or evaded, every feat of dexterity foiled by its counterpart. They came and went, retreated and pursued, attacked and eluded, till the eye grew giddy watching them, and the air was dim with dust. Meanwhile, in hideous mockery of the combat on earth, two large eagles of the desert, dark, gaunt, wide-winged birds, kept crossing and re-crossing overhead, wheeling round each other in intricate circles of flight, as though reproducing in mid-sky the skirmish beneath.

“ More than half-an-hour ; and then the scale, long evenly-balanced, turned. A sudden swirl of the hot wind of noon, tearing onwards with a violence not less extreme than transient, and driving sand and light gravel before it, swept the desert, and blew right into Daghfel’s face and eyes, blinding him for the moment to everything around. It was Moharib’s opportunity, and he seized it. Marking well his aim, he charged on his adversary ; and before the Emeer had recovered his lost guard, the spear of the Riahee had entered his right side below the ribs,

passed through and through flesh and mail, and came out several inches beyond on the left. Moḥarib tried to withdraw the weapon, but could not. Transfixed as he was, Daghfel rolled in blood at his horse's feet.

"A savage yell—of rage from these, of triumph from those—rent the air. Then followed a fearful battle; the Benoo-Sheyban dashed in, furious to avenge their chief; we met them half-way; it was hand to hand on both sides. The spear now availed little; swords and knives did the work henceforward. But fiercest of all, the struggle raged round Moḥarib, who, assailed by five swordsmen at once, defended himself like a tiger at bay, but was unable to free his path through. Sa'ad, Do'eyj, and I hastened to the rescue. Do'eyj fell, and was trampled under hoof; but Sa'ad and myself made our way good into the very thickest of the fight. I cut down a tall Sheybanee whose sword was even then raised to strike; Sa'ad severed the hand of another, a grizzly-haired man—it was 'Obeyd, Daghfel's own uncle—from the wrist; but all too late to save my ill-fated friend, who, covered with wounds, lay already on the ground, gashed and bleeding from head to foot. As I reached the spot he opened his eyes and looked up at me; death was written in red lines on every limb and on each feature of his pale face. Collecting his breath with difficulty, he said: 'Brother! Aḥmed! I commit you to God; live

happy.' My own voice choked in tears ; I had no answer. Then murmuring as to himself, 'I am Akhoo-Leyla, I am the cousin of Hafsah ; there is no God but God,' he repeated ; a slight struggle followed—he was dead.

"All these things passed in less time than I take in relating them. But while, forgetful of every one around, I leaned from my horse over the lifeless body of my brother, so true a brother to me, I saw as in a dream a horseman of Sheyban ride up and aim at me with his sword a blow which, so heart-broken and spiritless was I now, I cared neither to parry nor return. That horseman was the Emeer Thabit, Daghfel's younger brother ; and the blow, weighted with all the load of family vengeance, would have been my certain death, had not Aman, who the whole of that day had kept by me as near as he could, thrust himself in before the descending weapon, and received the cut intended for me. The sword-edge, intercepted by the negro's dagger glanced downwards, and entering the flesh aslant, made a wide, though not fatal gash : you have seen the scar. Aman staggered, but kept his seat, and recovering himself dealt the young Emeer a stroke over the shoulder that cleft the bone, and almost separated the entire arm from the body : Thabit fell, and never rose afterwards. Ja'ad, Musa'ab, and Sheebeeb came to our help ; the Sheebanees renewed the fight ; Sheebeeb was killed, and

Musa'ab disabled ; but Ja'ad, whose cool caution never failed him in the hottest of the tumult, gave many more and worse wounds than he took, till, aided by Aman, who hewed about him like a demon, he cleared an opening, through which he led my horse. I myself, who had received many gashes in the fray, beside the first head-wound in the hollow of Doneyyib, and was dizzy with loss of blood, and exhausted body and mind, could alone have offered no further defence, much less attack.

“By this, our desperation had proved itself more deadly than our assailants' fury. Five on our side had fallen ; two more, of whom I was one, were almost helpless ; but the remaining five, in spite of wounds and weariness, still sat firm on their saddles, sword in hand, and ready for the fight. Of the Benoo-Sheyban, nine lay dead or dying on the sand ; and four others had been so severely wounded that they were barely able, if at all, to lift a sword. Besides, the young Emeer Thabit had perished, the Sheykh 'Obeyd was as good as dead, and the Emeer Daghfel, though not killed outright, lay senseless and bleeding fast ; if he were left much longer so, his prospects of life were small. The ardour of our pursuers had cooled ! the energy of their vengeance slackened. We too had no desire to prolong the combat ; our enemy was still seven to five ; and escape, not slaughter, was our chief aim.

“ So on either side the survivors drew back. A pause followed. Then an elderly man, with face uncovered, and a thin grey beard, came forward from amidst the Sheybancee group. He held his lance somewhat reversed, and his sword, though unsheathed, was lowered.

“ ‘Brothers of Riah,’ he said; ‘God has decided the matter between us. Our leaders both of them have fallen; many brave men have perished also; much blood has been shed, and widows and orphans enough made for this one day. Let it suffice us. Go your way as God may guide you; we will go ours. Our two clans shall settle the price of blood afterwards.’

“ While he was thus speaking, Aman, mad to revenge his friend Sheebbeb, came close up to me, and whispered in my ear; ‘He lies, the grey-bearded villain; by God, he lies. Moharib is dead, my brother Sheebbeb is dead, and the Emeer Daghfel yet lives; I saw him move just now. I will go and finish him. I shall have done it before any of them can stop me; and after that if they wish for peace we will give it.’

“ But I held him back. ‘No,’ I said; ‘you shall not do it; he has got his share; leave him.’ I myself thought that Daghfel would for a certainty die of his wound; and the idea of killing in cold blood an enemy, even were he my rival, revolted my mind. Besides, was he not cousin to Zahra’? and had not two other

near relatives of hers fallen that day, if not by my hand, at least through my cause? Even should the Emeer survive, he would never see Zahra' again; of that my heart assured me. Whether he died or lived, I could wish him now no fresh harm; my account with him was cancelled, and I would not add to the past score.

"Meantime Ja'ad had ridden to the front. 'Be it so,' he said, addressing the Sheybanee envoy; 'only let the dead, ours and yours, remain unspoiled; each tribe shall bury its own. As to the price of blood, the Emeer 'Ajlan of Shomer, on whose pasture-grounds we now are, shall decide between us. Are you content with this?'

"After a little further parley, more for form's sake than otherwise, the Benoo-Sheyban consented. Two of our side and two of theirs alighted, and began scooping out with their spears the sand and earth for the shallow graves; those of Riaḥ to the east, those of Sheyban to the west. Each corpse was laid apart in its narrow resting-place, with the face turned towards the kiblah!¹ in haste then earth was thrown over them, and a large stone placed at the head and the foot of every mound.

"Moḥarib's grave was dug somewhat apart from the rest; for, though young, he had while living been looked

¹ Mahometans always lay a dead body on its side, looking in the direction of the centre of prayer at Mekka.

upon as the leader of our troop ; and but that twice as many had fallen on the Benoo-Sheyban side as on ours, the Benoo-Riah would not have desisted from the fight, while the Emeer Daghfel retained ever so slender a chance of life. When they had thrown the last handful of sand on the tomb that covered so much daring, constancy, and love, they took Moḥarib's lance and broke it there ; lastly they brought his horse, Ajrad, an iron-grey, and killed it over its master's burial place. The Benoo-Sheyban did the same at the grave of their Emeer Thabit. Then the *Fatihah* was recited by the few who knew it among those present ; and all was over.

“ While the work went on, those who did not take an active share in the burying, remained seated on their horses, their spears ready and their swords in their hands, to guard against treachery. I cried bitter tears, and would have dismounted to embrace my dead friend once more before he was hid for ever from me under the sand, but Ja'ad and Howeyrith restrained me.

“ ‘ It would profit you nothing,’ they said, ‘ and we fear for you, if you alight, the faithlessness of the “ *Arā-kim* ” of Benoo-Sheyban. You are he whom they would most gladly kill. We must now make what haste we can to get to a safe place of shelter, where our wounds may be bandaged, and where we may find drink and food. If we linger on the way we shall all die of thirst.’

“Sa’ad and Moḍarrib, their sad task ended, remounted, and we rode off together, now seven only, weary and disheartened. Yet neither then nor afterwards did I hear a word, a hint, of reproach. No one said, ‘You have brought us to this; it was your doing—on your account.’ I was a brother of the tribe; and with me as such they took their chances, good or ill, loss or gain alike; and if they grieved it was as much for my failure as for their own, or rather they made no distinction between the two. Not even for the dead did they hold me in any way responsible. The five who had fallen had but met their appointed fate, an honourable fate; it was matter of regret, but not of repining, still less of blame. To me the manner of my adopted tribesmen was unchanged, and the hearts and arms of Benoo-Riah were at my disposal after the ‘day of Marran’¹—so that fatal plain was called—as entirely as before.

“Looking back from our eastward path, I saw the Benoo-Sheyban slowly moving away in the opposite direction; they had laid Daghfel on his horse, and were supporting him on its back, one to either side. The Emeer’s arms hung dangling down; he gave no signs of life. Nearer I could discern the grave-stones, black

¹ Bedouins, in mentioning a fray, always call it “the day of such or such a place,” naming that where it was fought.

specks on the sand. Large irregular patches of brown gave witness to the blood that had been shed there. Then everything grew indistinct before my eyes; loss of blood had nearly deprived me of sight; and an all-engrossing thirst took possession of me, till neither feeling, care, nor thought was left but one longing, tormenting, insatiable cry of 'Water! Water!' Yet in this agony I made no effort to hasten my horse's pace, or to urge on my companions; it seemed to me that we all of us were moving along spell-bound in an evil dream, from which there was no escape nor end. I meanwhile neither hoped nor feared; nothing survived in me but the consciousness of present suffering, and a great void somewhere.

"An hour or so before sunset we entered among the fields and palm-groves belonging to the town of Sook; and threaded them for a good while before we came to a halt. This we did, not within the town itself, but at the door of a house that stood outside and alone among the gardens, on the very margin of the Euphrates stream. The owner of the house, Aboo-Salim by name, was himself of Bedouin family, and claimed descent from the Tey' clan; but though, like his father and grandfather before him, he preferred a settled to a roving life, he had enough of the desert in him to have married, not a maid of the town, but a Bedouin girl of Shomer origin. He was well acquainted with most, if not all, of my com-

panions; and had always been on the best possible terms with the Benoo-Riah generally.

To this man's hospitality we now had recourse, and were not deceived in our expectations. Aboo-Salim received us kindly and generously, put his entire selamluk at our service; spread mattresses, his own and those which he lost no time in borrowing from his neighbours, for our weary and wounded; gave himself a hand to bind up our cuts and gashes; and set, not only food in abundance, but—what we all longed for much more—clear cool water in plenty before us. Oh, that first draught from the red earth pitcher! It was as a new inpouring of life from the well of life. Our horses also were looked to, and their wants supplied; Aboo-Salim, his wife, and his three tall handsome sons lending their help everywhere.

“Howeyrith, his eyes now wet for the loss of his mulatto half-brother, and Aman, who bewailed inconsolably the death of Sheebbeb, washed the clotted blood from my wounds, which were many and wide, but none deep, and bandaged them carefully. They then, after some vain attempts to persuade me to eat, laid me on a mattress, covered me over, set water by me, and retired to the other side of the room. I have a faint remembrance of Ja'ad's face looking sadly at me, of Modarrib and Sa'ad holding some talk near me. . . . spite

of severe shooting pain, especially in my right arm, which had been badly slashed, I fell into a deep lethargic slumber, from which I did not awake for four-and-twenty hours.

“When I re-opened my eyes, Aman and Aboo-Salim with his family alone were by me. Before noon on the second day, the Bedouins had all departed, leaving me in charge of the hospitable owner of the house, who had promised to take good care of me till my complete recovery. Ja’ad and his party revisited first of all, as I learned later, the field of Marran, and there erected a pile of stones over Moḥarib’s grave, since known as *’Kabr-ul-’Ashik*,¹ and honoured by all passers by. Three years after I came that way myself, in circumstances and company, ah ! how different ! with many fellow-travellers, yet ah ! how lonely ! The tombs of Ḥarith, Do’eyj, and Sheebbeb—poor Doheym’s bones whitened unburied between Doneyyib and the Theneeyah—were scarcely discernible among the sand ; but my true brother’s cairn stood conspicuous to all far off upon the plain.

“I slaughtered a camel, and poured out the blood upon the grave ; then sat awhile by the cairn on the wind-swept plain, till my eyes streamed with tears ; and I said—

¹ “The lover’s grave.”

“ Drifted sand and stony heap ;—
There they laid thee down to sleep.
Warmer heart was never chilled,
Truer hand was never filled
With the grave's corrosive dust,
Grave unfaithful to its trust.
Short thy course, but bravely run.
Deep thy rest, and early won.
All too hasty art thou gone,
Friend, and left me much alone.
I would not repine, but yet
Half must envy, long regret.
Could the resurrection be,
I had wished it but for thee;
For though unchanged all else and new,
Thou unchanged would'st rise and true.' ”

“ God have mercy on him,” said Tanṭawee. “ I wonder what became of the girl, Hafṣah, I think you called her name, whom he loved ! ”

“ I never heard,” answered Hermann ; “ but she was a daughter of the Benoo-'Aḍra,¹ and probably did not long, if at all, survive the news of his death.”

“ It is a sad story,” said the Egyptian ; “ sad for them ; sad, too, in many ways for you who had so large a share in it.”

“ True,” replied the other, “ yet I would rather take

¹ A tribe renowned among Arabs for the passionateness of their love.

the love with all the sadness, than live without love one day on earth. Life is pleasant, youth and strength are pleasant, liberty is pleasant, danger is pleasant; the voices of men, the gallop of a horse over the open country, the rush of the waves as the ship's prow cuts through them, the air, the sky, the woods, the mountains, the plain, the sea, all these are pleasant,—but love is the only happiness, and when love ends may my life end also."

Tanṭawee looked at him, but said nothing. A pause followed; then Hermann resumed his story.

"I have little more to tell. From the tombs of Marran the Benoo-Riaḥ returned northwards to Ḥillah where the Emeer Faris then was, with the main body of his clan. But in spite of all the arbitration of the Emeer 'Ajlan could do, the 'blood price' of the fallen was not settled between the tribe and the Benoo-Sheyban, nor paid over, till the following autumn. .

"A month and a half I remained at Sook. My strength was indeed sufficiently restored before the end of that time to have left the place; but partly I neither knew nor cared where next to go, and partly I hoped on for some intelligence, however slight, of the only subject on earth in which I yet felt interest. Little was all that I could gather, then or afterwards: shall I one day know more?

“From that night at Doneyyib, that hour, she, Zahra’, —the bride, they called her,—had never been seen or heard of again. The maid-servants, entering her tent shortly after the first outcry of alarm in the camp, found nothing there but solitude and darkness. Lights were brought, search was made within, without; but of her no trace was to be discovered. Part of her dress had been left in the tent; some of her jewels and ornaments too lay here and there on the ground; others were gone. She fled then—but whither? All around the camp, in the neighbouring hollow, by the wells, among the sand-hills, they searched; but neither she herself, nor any track, any sign of how or where she had fled, could be discovered. Perhaps the tumult and trampling to and fro of the night might have effaced the traces; this only was certain, none appeared. Near she was not; they next sought her afar. During several days, for weeks even, scouts went out in every direction, —east, north, south, west. They journeyed fast and far; they questioned every encampment, every caravan, every wayfarer; they visited every halting-place, every well, every village, plain and hill, upland and lowland, in vain; she had vanished. But when I heard that the Emeer’s best mare, Dahma’, a well-known racer of Nejdee breed, had disappeared also that night; and that a lance of his, a sword, and a light coat of mail, were

missing too ; I formed, though I did not give to words my own conjectures ; and though I could gather no hope for myself, I feared less for her.

“Daghfel was carried by his clansmen, who found him unable to bear a longer journey, to a village near Koweyt,¹ where he languished many weeks between life and death. Not till after days had passed did they venture to inform him of Zahra’s flight ; but when they did so, he at once knew that she would never return to him ; and his rage and grief brought on a paroxysm that had nearly proved fatal. However, at last, by slow degrees, he recovered in part, his wounds healed, though his former vigour and activity were lost for ever. Shattered in body and mind, he retraced his way to the pasture-grounds of Zulfeh, and the Benoo-Sheyban chose themselves another chief.

“Of Sheyk Asa’ad and the family at Diar-Bekr—how they took the news, when it reached them, which it could not have failed to have done at last, and what became of them—I never heard, nor, in truth, did I much seek to hear. For the sake of one alone I loved the place ; and that one gone, it and all within it are things of the dead past to me ; nor have I once wished to see and revisit it again.

A small seaport town, at the head of the Persian Gulf.

"A month went by under Aboo-Salim's roof; and during that time the faithful care and attendance of Aman, joined to the untiring kindness of my host, his wife, and the other inmates of the house, had restored me to something of my former health and strength. I could now rise unaided and wander at will, first about the dwelling itself and the courtyard, then through the large palm-planted, canal-watered garden; then in the dense plantations around the village, along the full canal, and down to the great river Euphrates, scarce a mile distant.

"Day after day, week after week, passed thus, and yet I made no effort to quit the place and go elsewhere, however able to do so, but lingered on; not that anything detained me there, but that I had nowhere else to go to, and could not resolve on any new plan of action or life. The West I had left long since, and the East seemed now to have left me. I was more isolated in the world than a shipwrecked sailor alone on a rock in mid-sea.

"Weariness is repaired by rest, and the wounds of the body soon heal; so do those of the soul sometimes, but not such as mine. Most hopeful of men once, I was now most hopeless: the full cup of perfect happiness had been brought all too near my lips, then ruthlessly dashed from them; I had half-entered within the gates of Eden, then suddenly, violently, been thrust out, and the doors closed and barred behind me. My whole heart was numb, my

whole life spilt. As I roamed, desultory and purposeless, beneath the palm-groves, through the gardens, the colours seemed to have been blotted out of herb and tree, earth and sky ; the rushing waters, the waving leaves, the moving figures of men, were pictured outlines, not realities ; sound and sight had no meaning ; myself a mere mechanism, a shadow, a dream.

“Everywhere, turn as I might, a dead blank was before me, from minute to minute, from hour to hour ; a void unfilled, which I knew not how to fill ; which nothing could fill. It was as though a whole existence had abruptly come to an end, and had now to be replaced by a new one, wanting as yet ; and I unable to tell whence it was to come, or how. For, after all, our human nature is capable of but one apt complement, and requires one ; if that one be withdrawn we become incomplete, aimless. An insect, when its antennæ have been torn off, turns round and round in its place, not knowing any longer what to make of itself, or how to direct its course ; like it the hands of a watch when the balance-spring is broken ; so was I in this utter, final loss of her I loved.

“Is there a God in heaven ? or is all chance, hap-hazard ? or is it, indeed, blind fate, destiny, inevitable ? A question often asked, often answered, never resolved ; perhaps, because its disjunctive form should, to admit of a truthful reply, be changed for the conjunctive, and the

solution be conveyed in a triple affirmative, till the growing knowledge of another and wider life shall make that triple single.

“But that answer is not ready in the hour of despondency like mine, when, almost broken-hearted, I asked myself this very question in the garden of Sook. It was the fortieth evening after that night from which, in spite of myself, I long kept involuntary reckoning. I had strayed to some distance from the village, and had sat down in a date-grove, the last and furthest of all, by the bank of the main canal, near where it joined the river. The autumn sun had already set, but a broad bright line of glowing red fringed the horizon west and south; above it, a band of yellow; above that, green; fading upwards into the deep blue. No breath of wind stirred the warm still air; except the distant barking of the town dogs, not a sound was to be heard. Alone, on an earth-heap, I watched the light fade by degrees between the outermost row of palm-trees, while the untiring stream flowed deep and rapid beneath the steep crumbling bank at my feet, and wished myself dead. Why should I live any longer, or to what end?

“Then as night came on, and the pale disc of the moon covered itself with renewed brilliancy, and the great stars shone out one by one in the highest of the heavens, I gazed around on the calm earth, the calm

sky, so lovely, so perfect in their calm, so full of hidden energy and life, and felt fresh strength and energy rise up within me. Great, irreparable indeed, had been my loss—bitter as death my grief—yet in some ways, in many ways, it was well. Well to be alone, to fight my battle single-handed, to let my own thoughts, my own actions, work themselves out and unravel themselves of themselves, not through or with another. The creeper clothes the tree, adorns it, gives it a bright and green outer life; but all the while it weakens, cramps, unsinews, till the tree becomes itself almost a creeper. Better then, perhaps, that the creeper be stripped off, however roughly, while yet is time, lest the uncovered tree, bared too late, should wither and die. It has happened to many.

“True; yet no love could ever replace the lost love, no face be to me what that face had been. What then should henceforth stand me in love’s place? What re-knit the loosened existence? For what should I labour, when the only prize that could reward my labour was irrecoverably withdrawn? What profit was there in the strife that could never win a crown? Had I but hope!—but no—there was no hope—reason said it. Where was she now? Where I? What likelihood that we should ever meet again?

“While thus I thought, or rather felt—for connected thought was not in my power—I heard a sound as of

singing ; a pleasant voice, drawing nearer and nearer to my retreat. The voice came, it seemed, from a bend of the river higher up, not far off, but hidden from me by a clump of trees ; for the plantation was at the angle where the canal joined the main stream ; scarce five minutes' distance from the hillock on which I sat. As the song approached, it ceased ; and in its stead I thought I could distinguish the splash of oars, moved leisurely through the water. I stood up and watched for the moment when the boat itself should come in sight from behind the trees ; but before it did so, and while, though hidden, almost at its nearest to me, a second voice, a man's also, but clearer and sweeter, and louder than the first, took up the song. I listened ; every word, every note, reached me distinct across the smooth stream surface. Thus it came :

“ ‘After years ;
After joys together tasted,
After years in absence wasted,
Bitterest bitter, sweetest sweet,
In the garden porch we meet,
After years.

“ ‘After years ;
O'er us as in former time
The red roses conscious twine
Lattice-up ; and hand-in-hand
'Mid the chequered light we stand
After years.

“After years;
Each had long forecast that day,
Each had thought of much to say,
Plaint of love till then deferred;
Yet we neither uttered word,
After years.

“After years;
Water to the drought-cleft lip,
Haven to the storm-vexed ship,
Stillest rest from toil outdone,
These were ours, and more in one,
After years.

“After years;
Calm no reasoned thought could reach,
Thoughts beyond the range of speech,
Joys that life and change outlast,
Deep as death our lot was cast,
After years.

“After years;
From the never of those years,
From the waste whose dewes are tears,
Thus we pluck thee evermore
Of the sunlight Eden shore,
After years.

“After years;
In the latter month of May
Bloomed the roses, glowed the day.
Hand-in-hand we stood, to know
All can love on love bestow
After years.’

“The voice ceased ; the sound of oars followed, now close at hand. While the song lasted, I had remained motionless as if entranced ; I now roused myself and ran to the edge of the bank. Before me the Euphrates, lighted up by the brilliant moon, swept along in silver eddies between low black lines of shore ; and half way across, a small boat, in which two figures sat, floated rapidly down the river ; a ripply line of light parted right from under the bows ; and the oars, now raised, now lowered, dripped sparkles on the glassy face of the water that they cleft. Of the two within the boat, one rowed, one sat quiet near the stern ; but of neither could I discern the features, or anything to recognise by in form or dress. As I looked the seated figure turned towards me, half-rose, and waved a hand ; an instant later the boat and those in it had disappeared from sight behind a tongue of tall rushes opposite the corner where the canal bent round to join the river.

“ Not knowing what to think, or who the singers were, whence they came, and what the meaning of their song, and of the signal, if signal it was, that had followed it, I stood fixed and gazing at the spot where the boat had vanished, as if I expected to see it reappear. When, at last, aware of the idleness of my watch, I turned, Abou-Salim's third son stood beside me. My prolonged absence from the house had caused some of the

youngster had by his father's order, been searching for me everywhere. Of the boat and those in it, he had, it was evident by his manner, neither seen nor heard anything ; I asked nothing, and made no allusion to the subject then or afterwards, but followed the lad indoors silently.

"The change had been wrought ; I was not indeed my whole former self, yet still Ahmed Agha, ready for life and action once more. After a short but refreshing sleep, cheered by hopeful dreams, I woke to the projects and interests of the future ; called Aman, and bade him to prepare for a journey to distant lands. It was Friday ; at noon I dressed myself with care, went to the mosque and joined in the prayers of the day, and an hour later embarked on a large boat, bound for Baṣrah. From that hour began a new series of events and wanderings, by land and sea, that have at last, as you know, brought me to Egypt, and thence hither.

"Enough of this ; I will go and lie down for the hour or two that remain to dawn ; you too, will have need of repose before the work of the day : it will be a full one for us all. Good-night." And without waiting for further talk he took up the striped mughrebee¹ blanket

¹ That is, from the "Mughreb," or north African coast, where the best of such articles are manufactured.

on which he had been seated, and removed to another part of the deck, where he composed himself to sleep. Tanṭawee remained for a few minutes where he was, silent and thoughtful, looking at the masts against the sky, and the star-shine on the water, till he too lay down and slept.

Next morning the ship anchored before 'Ákka.

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